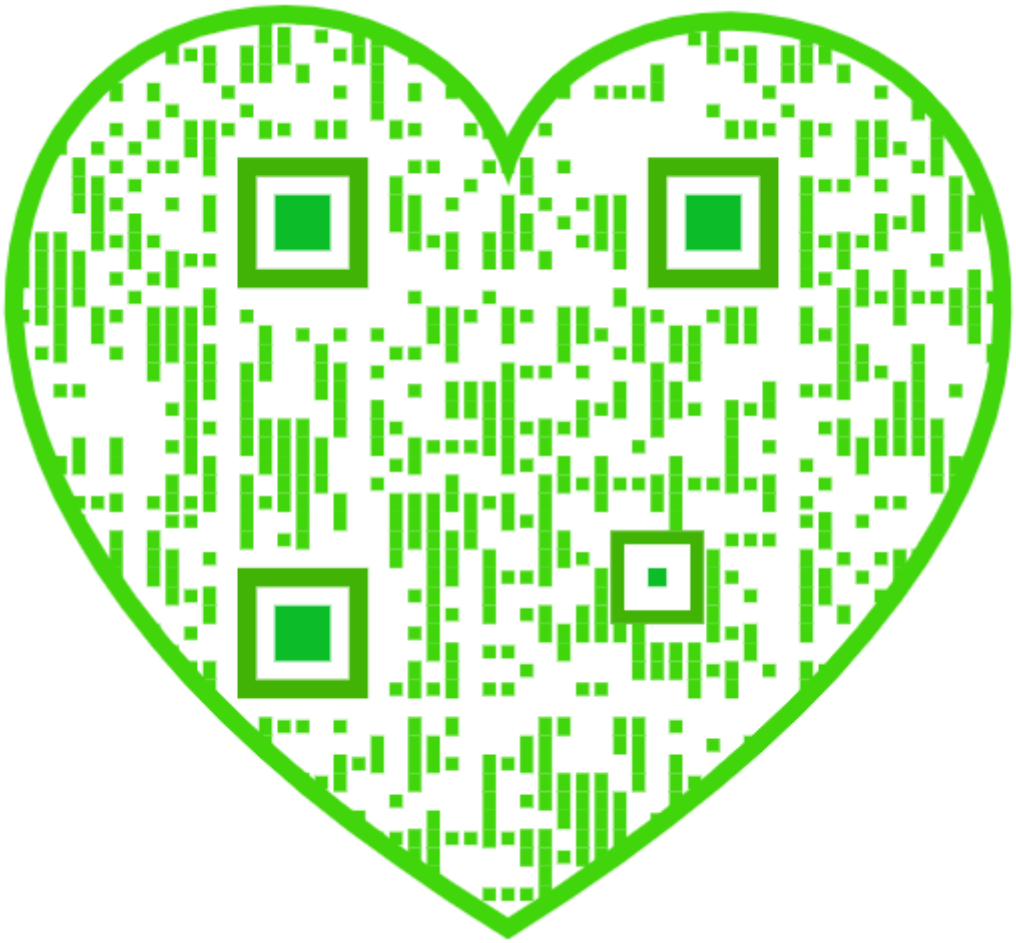

HYBRID BETWEEN GROUSE AND BLACK-GAME.

Sport - Scotland
(L.C.)

THE

MOOR AND THE LOCH:

CONTAINING

PRACTICAL HINTS ON MOST OF THE HIGHLAND SPORTS,
AND NOTICES OF THE HABITS OF THE DIFFERENT CREATURES
OF GAME AND PREY IN THE MOUNTAINOUS
DISTRICTS OF SCOTLAND;

WITH

AN ESSAY ON LOCH-FISHING.

BY

JOHN COLQUHOUN.

"Ilk flow'r that blooms on foreign fell
Wad mind me o' the heather-bell;
Ilk little streamlet's jeuk and turn
Wad mind me o' Glenourock burn;
Lands may be fair ayont the sea,
But Hieland hills and lochs for me!"

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TO

SIR JAMES COLQUHOUN OF LUSS, BART. M.P., &c. &c.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF

THE MANY RAMBLES WE HAVE TAKEN TOGETHER,

IN BOYHOOD AND YOUTH,

WITH OUR FISHING-RODS AND GUNS,

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY HIS BROTHER,

JOHN COLQUHOUN.

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PREFACE.

I OFFER no apology for the publication of this volume, as I have never seen any other which attempts to give minute directions in the sports, or information regarding the animals, of my native hills;* and since they are becoming increasingly the objects of pursuit, especially to English sportsmen, some such book seemed really needed.

With regard to the subject itself, many will blame as trifling any work which treats merely of amusement; and I am aware that this censure is not altogether unfounded. It is not, however, to divert men from higher occupations, that I ask them, now and then, to ramble over the wild hill

* I do not know of any exception to this remark but Mr Scrope's book on Deer-Stalking, which has made it unnecessary for me to touch on that subject.

or by the side of the moorland loch. Would not the dyspeptic student feel both his mental and bodily powers increased by such a substitute for his customary monotonous stroll? And need I tell the indolent voluptuary or midnight opium-eater what benefit *he* might find, would he thus change his stimulus, and ensure to himself the quiet slumbers which follow temperance and health? I well know, indeed, the engrossing nature even of these harmless recreations, and am far from intending my book to lead any one to spend as much time in them as I have too often done. But I rather hope it may have a contrary tendency, by communicating to the novice in Highland sports such knowledge as he could not acquire for himself without long practice and patient investigation.

The sports of the field, when taken *as recreations*, and not as *pursuits*, may surely be ranked among the most innocent; nor can I see that hours passed in such scenes as those I have attempted to describe, need be lost to an observant and well-directed mind.

THE MOOR AND THE LOCH.

GROUSE AND BLACK-GAME SHOOTING.

GROUSE shooting, when the season begins, and our moors are thronged by ardent sportsmen from all parts of the kingdom, although requiring some tact and skill, is mere child's play compared to what it becomes when the birds are wild and wary.

In the month of August or September, a few general rules may enable a good shot, upon a tolerable moor, to load his game-carrier. He should commence upon the farthest end of his range, giving his dogs the wind, and select some part of the moor, near the centre, to which he must endeavour to drive all his packs. His follower should be a good marker,* active and intelligent in com-

* In marking grouse, when you can no longer distinguish them from the brown heather, still let your eye follow their course, as the flapping of their wings when they light is much longer discernible than the rapid motion of their flight.

prehending his least signal, and always ready, when the dogs point, to place himself so as to prevent the birds taking a wrong direction. After having skirmished in this way until about two or three o'clock, he may send for a fresh couple of his oldest and most experienced dogs, and, with the greatest care, begin to beat this reserved ground. If the day is favourable, and he has not strangely mismanaged, he ought to make bloody work. Should his range be along the steep side of a mountain, the birds are much less likely to leave the ground; when raised, they will probably (unless he is beating up and down the hill, which is neither an easy nor good way) fly straight along the mountain side, and the young grouse-shooter might suppose would drop down upon a line with the place they rose from; but no such thing,—the pack, after getting out of sight, before lighting will take a turn, and fly a considerable way either to the right or left. The sportsman must judge by the wind, and other circumstances, which direction they have taken; but if he does not find them in the one, he must try the other. Should he have the whole of a detached hill, even if a small range, the birds are so unwilling to leave it at the beginning of the season, that they will often fly round and round until he has completely broken them: no finer opportunity than this for filling the bag.

On some of our moors grouse are as plentiful as partridge in the preserved turnip-fields of Norfolk: no man

would then break his beat to follow a pack; but let him select the lowest and most likely ground, as near the centre of his range as possible, for his evening shooting. Grouse, and indeed all game, when raised, generally fly to lower ground, and when they begin to move about on the feed, are more easily found by the dogs; for which reason the evening is always the most successful part of the day.

As the season advances, and the birds become strong on the wing, the difficulty of breaking the packs is tenfold increased. Some fire very large shot among them when they rise: this may often succeed, but is a most unsportsman-like proceeding. The plan I always adopt is, first to select my ground for the evening, taking care that it is full of hillocks; grouse have a great liking to them, and when thus concealed their flights are much shorter. I then commence ranging my other ground as described; and when I get a shot, although the pack should rise at some distance, I select one of the leaders, and, if it drop, the pack is far more likely to break, and the nearer birds are left for the second barrel.

Always cross the dog a good way ahead when he points, and cock both barrels; it is impossible to bring down your birds in crack style otherwise. Unless shooting in company, I generally have my gun cocked, and held ready to fire when walking over ground where there is any likelihood of birds rising—this I only recommend to the experienced sportsman.

Never increase the size of your shot when the birds are wild, *unless with a larger gun.* Those who object to this additional weight, or who give their gun to be carried by a servant, will make but poor work at this season, as many of the best chances rise without a point at all. Stick to the last to scattered birds: one broken pack at this time is worth a dozen others.

About an hour before dusk, be upon the hillocks with your most experienced pointers: if they have been accustomed to grouse-shooting at the end of the season, they will hunt round them with the greatest caution; and when they wind birds, if ever so slightly, will point and look for your approach. Suppose your dog, statue-like, on one of the hillocks,—watch the direction of his nose, walk rapidly and noiselessly round in the opposite direction, as it were to meet his point, and you will most probably come upon the birds within fair distance. Should the hillock be steep, and only about a gunshot in height, walk straight over the top, and if the grouse be, as is most probable, on the side or at the bottom, you are certain of a tolerable shot: should you have broken any packs in the morning, and driven them here, you are very likely to get some excellent chances.

As the shades of evening close upon you, the birds will lie much better: many a capital shot have I got when I could scarcely see them. A very indistinct view of his object is quite enough for a good snap shot who is accustomed to his gun, and I would not guarantee the

success of any other at this time of the year. In fact, you must be prepared for every shot being a snap at the beginning of the day, and many at the end. By always following the above directions, I scarcely ever, to the end of the season, came home with less than two or three brace after a few hours' shooting, upon a moor where I used, in August, to average from fifteen to twenty in a whole day.

No man ought to beat the same range oftener than twice a-week, as grouse, after being dispersed, do not collect in the evening like partridge, but are often some time before they gather; the best days are those with a warm sun and light breeze. When the weather is windy and rainy, after October, they flock; and it is of no use to disturb them till it is fine again, when they disperse. You may expect good sport the first black frost. A sort of lethargy seems to come over the birds: I have seen several in a day standing up, without an attempt at concealment, within forty yards—a rare opportunity for poachers and bad shots.

Many suppose that grouse change their ground with the changes of weather, and even lay down rules what parts of the mountain they frequent according to its variations. I have watched them narrowly for many years, and am firmly of opinion that they only shift to the longest heather on the lea side of any knolls near their usual haunts, when they want shelter from the sun, wind, or rain; except indeed in winter, when many of

them come down to lower ground than they ever frequent at other times. I have likewise heard it asserted that grouse descend the hills to feed: this I also believe to be erroneous; and have no doubt that, at feeding times, they only move to the first short, sweet patch of young heather, the tender tops of which form their chief food during a great part of the year. The young packs eat the seeds of the various grasses and weeds that grow in the moors, and are particularly fond of sorrel. At the hatching time the hen devours quantities of earth-worms with great avidity.

BLACK-GAME.

Black-game do not pair like grouse; and shooting the hen* and young birds at the beginning of the season, is a simple business. You have only to make yourself master of the places they frequent. They may always be found near a short thick rush, which can be easily seen on the moor, the brown seeds of which form the principal food of the young packs. When your dogs point near these rushes, and especially if they "road," you may be almost sure of black-game. The old hen generally rises first,

* Many gentlemen are now beginning to shoot the hens, observing the great increase of black-game and decrease of grouse in some districts. This may in part be attributed to the advance of cultivation; but I cannot help thinking the black-game have a good share in driving off the grouse—as I know of one instance where the latter were killed off, and the former again returned to their old haunts. I believe it is also more than suspected that the capercailzie, wherever they are introduced, have a great inclination to dispossess both.

the young pack lying like stones; no birds are more easily shot.

The old cocks, even in August, are never very tame: they are sometimes found singly; at others, in small flocks, from six to ten. Their food on the moor consists of cranberries; another berry, found in mossy places, called in Scotland the "crawberry," and the seed of the rush before named. They being very strong on the wing, have not the same reason as the young packs for keeping near their food, and are often found far from it, especially in the heat of the day; shelter from the sun being their chief object. There can then be no better place to beat for them than among thick crops of bracken. Should you find them in such good cover, they will often give you a capital double shot.

As the season advances, black-game are the wildest of all birds. Fair open shooting at them is quite out of the question. As they never eat heather,* their food on the moors soon becomes scarce; they then much more frequent the stubble-fields and copses by the hill-sides. You may often see twenty or thirty feeding together on the sheaves, when the corn is first cut; but exceedingly alert for the approach of an enemy. I have seen them doing the farmer as much injury as so many barn-door

* Black-game when domesticated do eat heather, likewise grouse the tops of birch, alder, &c.: this, in both cases, I believe to be an acquired taste, as I have often opened their crops at different times during the shooting season, and never once detected heather in those of black-game, nor any thing except heather or corn in those of grouse.

fowls. Your best plan then is to hide yourself among the sheaves, and wait for their feeding-hours. If you are well-concealed, and select the proper part of the field, you may have an opportunity of killing a brace sitting, with your first barrel, and another bird with your second.

As the fields become bare, and the days shorten, they begin to feed three times; namely, at daybreak, at noon, and an hour before dusk. To get a shot then is much more difficult. I have made a hole in the stone walls which enclose most of the Highland fields, in order to shoot through it. I have also placed a bush on the top to screen myself when rising to fire; but they have such quick sight and acute hearing, both well exercised when feeding on this dangerous ground, that I have found it a better plan not to attempt the sitting shot. My way is to crawl as near the place where they are feeding as possible, and make my attendant and one of the farm-servants enter at each end of the field opposite, and come leisurely down towards the birds; they are then almost sure to fly over your head, and give you an excellent double shot. Care must be taken, however, to ascertain that no sentinel is perched upon the wall, or any high ground near, as there often is at the beginning of the feed. Should there be, wait patiently till he joins the flock. I have also, by this method, often got a capital chance at grouse feeding on the stubble, which they sometimes do in the lowlands, when returning from my shooting-ground in Selkirkshire.

In a country where there are few corn-fields, you may get the best sport at old blackcocks by judiciously beating the plantations on the sides of the hills, especially if there are birch and alder in them, the tender tops of which form a great part of their winter food. They are still more likely to frequent these belts if juniper-bushes are near; but great caution is necessary in beating them. After quietly taking your station at the upper side, send your man with an old and very steady pointer to the under; keep about thirty yards in advance of them: the man must remain outside the plantation, striking the trees with a stick, and making all the noise he can; the pointer must not, if possible, range out of his sight. You are thus pretty sure of the shot; but if your man beats through the belt, the birds are very likely either to fly straight forward, or out at the under side. Two brace of old cocks may be considered a good day's sport. If the plantations are very large, beat by sections in the same way.

Even in woodcock shooting *in large covers*, more harm than good is often done by a noisy set of beaters. I never take more than one attendant, my retriever, and an old pointer. When I get a point, I choose the most open place, and send my man to strike the bush on the opposite side; employing my retriever to beat any very thick cover near. This, however, he is not allowed to do unless desired. Any man who adopts this plan, will eventually be more successful than with beaters: more

birds may of course be put up when a number of people are scouring the woods; but the shots will neither be so many nor so fair.

Black-game and grouse are easily tamed; ptarmigan, I believe, never. The keeper of the pheasantry at Rossdhu had a black-cock, a grouse, a partridge, and a pheasant confined together. They agreed pretty well, and the grouse, being a hen, hatched two successive seasons. The first year the whole of this cross-breed died; but the next, with great care, a couple were reared. They were both cocks, and, when come to their full plumage in winter, were a blackish brown, something between the colour of a grouse and a black-cock. They were presented by my late father to the Glasgow Museums, where they may now be seen. I have given in the frontispiece an accurate likeness of that in the College Museum.

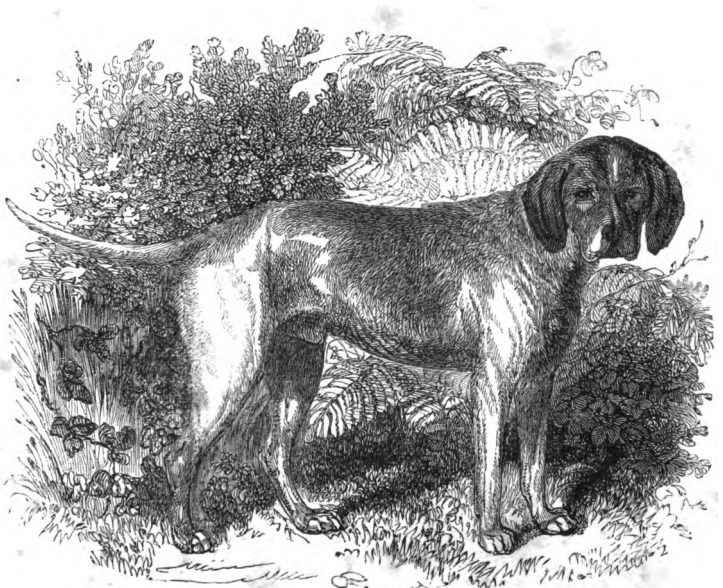
Before ending this subject, I may put gentlemen on their guard against two ways of poaching grouse and black-game, I believe not generally known. The first is, hunting the young packs before the moors open, with a very active terrier or "colly." If the dog understands the business, he will chop a great many in a day. On a moor in Roxburghshire, I saw a sheep-dog, accompanied by a young farmer, performing to admiration. I had the curiosity to watch their proceedings until I saw the dog snap a young grouse, quick as thought. The other plan is, to set a rat-trap in the green springs

where the birds come to drink and to eat small insects: this may be continued all the season. We often hear that these traps are set for carrion-crows. They may be, but any one who understands the habits of grouse and black-game, knows what birds they are most likely to catch; and if this way of destroying vermin is persevered in by the keepers, "the laird" will soon begin to shoot his grouse minus a leg.

DOGS FOR THE MOORS.

My advice on the subject of dogs must begin with the caution, never to lay too much stress on their general appearance. For my own part, I must confess that I am not very partial to the exceedingly fine-coated, silken-eared, tobacco-pipe-tailed canine aristocracy; for, even if their noses and style of hunting be good, they are invariably much affected by cold and wet weather, and can seldom undergo the fatigue requisite for the moors.

The most necessary qualifications of a dog are travel, lastiness, and nose. The two first are easily ascertained; but the other may not be found out for some time. I have seen dogs shot over for a season without committing many mistakes, and on that account thought excellent by their masters: their steadiness of course has been shown, but they have given no proof of first-rate nose. Even a good judge may be unable to form an accurate estimate of a dog's olfactory powers, until he has for several days hunted him against another of acknowledged superiority. The difference may then be shown, not by the former putting up game, but by the latter getting more points. Should there be no tip-top dog at hand to compete with, the only other criterion,



THIS, AS MAY BE SEEN, IS A VERY OLD DOG.

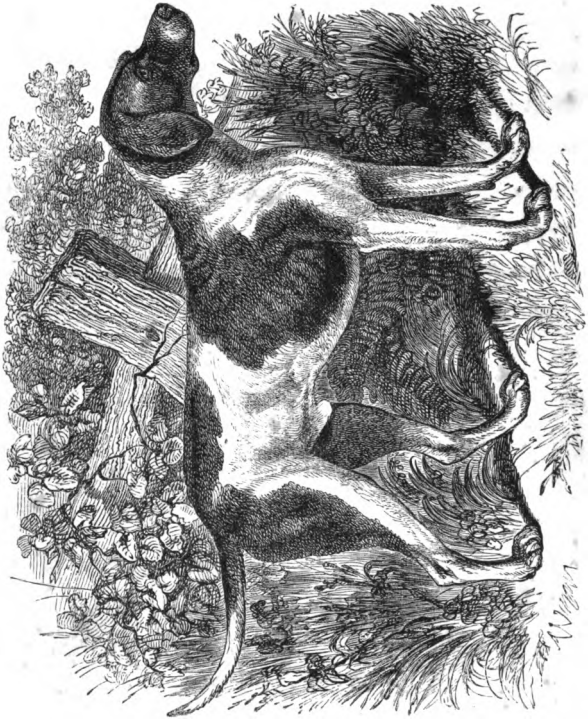
though not at all an infallible one, is the manner of finding game. The sportsman must watch most narrowly the moment when the dog first winds: if he throws up his head, and moves boldly and confidently forward, before settling on his point, it is a very good sign; if, on the contrary, he keeps *pottering* about, trying first one side, then another, with his nose sometimes close upon the ground, even though at last he comes to a handsome point, I should think it most probable that he is a badly-bred, inferior animal.

The purchaser, before taking the trouble to try a dog, should make sure that he has a hard round foot, is well set upon his legs, symmetrically though rather strongly made; but the great thing is the head. It ought to be broad between the ears, which should hang closely down; a fall in below the eyes; the nose rather long, and not broad; nostrils very soft and damp. If these points are attended to, the dog will seldom have a very inferior nose. The above remarks relate principally to pointers, as I greatly prefer them to setters; but if the sportsman has a scanty kennel, I should rather recommend the latter, as they are often capable of undergoing more fatigue, and not so apt to be foot-sore. For my own part, however, I find the pointer so much more docile and pleasant to shoot with, that I never use setters; concerning the choice of which, as there are so many varieties, totally differing in appearance from each other, it would be useless to lay down any rules.

Many gentlemen, when the shooting season begins, are shamefully taken in by dog-breakers and others. Few are aware how difficult it is to know a good dog before he is shot over. The breaker shows his kennel, puffing it off most unmercifully. The sportsman chooses one or two dogs that suit his fancy; they drop at the sound of the pistol, and perhaps get a point or two, when birds are so tame that no dog but a cur could possibly put them up. The bargain is struck, the dog paid for; but, when fairly tried, shows his deficiency in finding game. I have seen the breaker look round with an air of the greatest triumph if a hare should start, and his dog not chase: this is what any man who understands the elements of breaking, by a little trouble, and taking the dog into a preserve of hares, can soon effect.

Other obvious defects, such as not quartering the ground, hunting down wind, not obeying the call or signal, the veriest novice in field-sports will immediately detect. It is not, however, with faults so apparent that dogs for sale are generally to be charged. They are, for the most part, drubbed into such show subjection * that the tyro fancies them perfect, and only finds out

* Dogs of this kind remind me of an anecdote I remember to have heard from a brother sportsman, but for the truth of which I cannot vouch. Walking out with a high-broke pointer, he suddenly missed him, when he presently espied him soberly and submissively following the heels of an old Guinea-fowl, whose reiterated cry of "Come back, come back," he had thought it his duty to obey!!



their bad breeding and nose after a week's shooting. To assist the judgment of the uninitiated, I have given accurate likenesses of the three best pointers I ever had. I know some faults might be found in them, but they have all the main requisites.

If your dogs are well bred, the great secret of making them first-rate on the moor is, never to pass over a fault, never chastise with great severity nor in a passion, and to kill plenty of game over them. There are two faults, however, to which dogs, otherwise valuable, are sometimes addicted; these give the sportsman great annoyance, but may often be more easily corrected than he is aware. One is the inveterate habit, contracted through bad breaking, of running in when the bird drops. Of course, if a dog is known to have this trick, he can be broken of it by the trash-cord and spiked collar; but many gentlemen buy dogs before shooting over them, and commence their day's sport without these appendages. They are thus obliged either to couple up the dog or run the risk of having any birds that remain, after the pack has risen, driven up, and those that have fallen mangled by him. I have seen dogs most unmercifully flogged, and yet bolt with the same eagerness every shot. It was easy to see the reason: the dog was followed by the keeper, endeavouring to make him "down;" there was thus a race between them which should reach the fallen bird.

The plan to adopt with a dog of this description is,

when the grouse drops and the dog rushes forward, never to stir—coolly allow him to tear away at the game until you have loaded; by which time he will most probably have become ashamed of himself. You will now walk up most deliberately, and without noticing the bird take the dog by the ear, and pull him back to where you fired, all the time giving several hearty shakes, and calling "down." When you get to the spot where you shot from, take out your whip, and between the stripes call "down" in a loud voice; continue this at intervals for some time, and, even when you have finished your discipline, don't allow the dog to rise for ten minutes at least; then, after speaking a few words expressive of caution, take him slowly up to the bird and lift it before his nose. If this plan is rigidly followed for several points, I never saw the dog that would continue to run in at the shot.

The other defect is chiefly applicable to young dogs; it is when they trust to their more experienced comrade to find the game, and keep continually on the outlook expecting him to do so. Nothing can be done for this but to pay the greatest attention to their point; selecting it in preference to that of the other dog, and always to fire, however small the chance of hitting the bird. Also change the dogs they hunt with as often as possible. Young dogs, with this treatment, will very soon acquire confidence, and never keep staring at their companion, unless he is settling upon a point.

When the sportsman rears his own puppies, he should be most particular, not only about the acknowledged excellence of the sire and dam, but also that their breeding is unexceptionable and *well-known*—especially that there is no cross of the rough, *however remote*, when breeding pointers, and no smooth blood when setters are the object. It sometimes happens that a dog, though not well bred, may turn out first-rate; but the progeny of such dog or bitch hardly ever do. This double caution is therefore most necessary, as otherwise much time and trouble might be spent upon a dog that never would be worth it, from a mistaken idea, that as his parents were excellent, he must *in the end* turn out well too.

The essentials of dog-breaking may be found in a pamphlet, published in London a few years ago, by the gamekeeper of Sir John Sebright. Although not agreeing with it in every particular, I certainly think it the best that has been written on the subject.

WILD-FOWL SHOOTING ON THE HIGHLAND LOCHS.

THE exciting nature of the winter shooting on one of our large Highland lochs, if well frequented by water-fowl, can hardly be conceived by a stranger to the sport. It, in fact, partakes so completely of the nature of deer-stalking, that a man who is an adept at the one would be sure, with a little practice, to be equally so at the other. I should have been astonished to find this amusement so little followed by gentlemen, had I not sometimes witnessed the bungling manner in which they set about it: it is, indeed, as rare to find a gentleman who knows any thing of this sport as a rustic who has not a pretty good smattering of it. The reason is obvious. The squire, who may be a tolerable shot, is all eager anxiety until he can show off his right and left upon the devoted fowl; while the clod, having only his rusty single barrel to depend upon, and knowing that if the birds should rise, his chance is very considerably lessened, uses all the brains of which he is master in order to get the sitting shot; and knowing also from experience, that the nearer he gets to his game the better his chance, spares no trouble to come to close quarters. He will crawl for a hundred yards like a serpent, although he

should be wet through, reckless of his trouble and discomfort if he succeed in his shot.

I will now suppose the squire by the loch-side on a fine winter morning, dressed perhaps in a flaring green or black velveteen, with a Newfoundland retriever of the same sable hue. He sees a flock of fowl well pitched on the shore, which most likely have seen both him and his dog, and are quite upon their guard. He looks round for a few bushes to screen him *when near* the birds; and then with a sort of half-crouching attitude, admirably imitated by his canine friend, advances upon his game. Unless the place is particularly adapted for a shot, the flock have probably seen him appearing and re-appearing several times, and whenever he is sufficiently near to alarm them, fly up together, to his no small chagrin. But should he *by any chance* get near enough for a shot, his dog, not being thoroughly trained, will most likely either show himself, or begin whimpering when his master prepares to shoot, or, in short, do something which may spoil the sport; and even supposing the better alternative, that he should have no dog at all, and be within shot of his game, he will, in all probability, either poke his head over a bush when going to fire, or make a rustling when putting his gun through it, and so lose the sitting shot.

Now for the few hints I have to offer. It may be thought that none were wanting, after the subject of wild-fowl shooting has been so well and fully discussed by Colonel Hawker; but I have never seen any sug-

gestions to assist the beginner how to proceed in the winter shooting on our large Highland lochs; and many a man may have it in his power to enjoy the recreation in this way, who has neither opportunity nor inclination to follow it in all its glory on the coast, with a stanchion gun and punt.

The man who engages in this sport must be of an athletic frame and hardy habits: he must not mind getting thoroughly wet, nor think of rheumatism while standing or sitting in clothes well soaked, perhaps for an hour at a time, watching fowl. As to waterproof boots, they are totally out of the question: the common diker's boots would so impede your walking, and also be such a hinderance when crawling upon ducks or running upon divers, as considerably to lessen your chance; and the India-rubber boots would, in no time, become so perforated with briers and whin as to be of little more service than a worsted stocking. The most suitable dress is a light brown duffle shooting-jacket and waistcoat, as near the shade of the ground and trees in the winter season as possible, your great object being to avoid the quick sight of the birds; shoes well studded with nails, like a deer-stalker's, to prevent slipping, and a drab-coloured waterproof cap. Should the weather be very cold, I sometimes put on two pairs of worsted stockings, but never attempt any protection from the wet. If snow is on the ground, wear a white linen cover to your shooting-jacket, and another to your cap.

A gun suitable for this sport is indispensable. It certainly ought to be a double-barrel, and as large as you can readily manage; it must fit you to a nicety, and carry from two to three ounces of No. 3 or 4 shot, (I prefer the latter,) both very strong and regularly distributed. Its elevation must be most true, if any thing over-elevated. As to length of barrel, calibre, &c., every man will, of course, suit his own fancy, and give his directions accordingly. Should he not be *au-fait* at this, by explaining the sort of gun he wants to any of the first-rate makers, he need not doubt their giving him satisfaction, and none more so than William Moore. I never use any shot larger than No. 4, except for hoopers,* (when, of course, I would sacrifice my chance at other birds,) as a fair shot at a small bird like a teal might be missed with larger; and a man should not go alarming the whole shore, firing random shots at flocks of fowl nearly out of reach on the water.

Next in importance to the gun, is a proper retriever. The Newfoundland is not quite the thing: first, his black colour is against him—brown is much to be preferred: then, I should wish my dog occasionally to assist me in this inland shooting, by beating rushes or thick cover up creeks, where you may often plant yourself in an open situation for a shot, and your dog put up

* Wild-geese, bernacle, brent-geese, &c., seldom pitch upon the Highland lochs; the former only for a short time to rest.

the fowl, which are almost certain to fly down past you. If you accustomed a Newfoundland to this, he might, from his strength and vivacity, learn the trick of breaking away when you did not wish him. The best and most efficient kind of dog for this work is a cross between a water-dog and large terrier;—the terrier gives nose, and the water-dog sagacity. I should say, that before you can procure one which upon trial may prove worth the great trouble of thoroughly training, you may have to destroy half a dozen. You should begin your training when the dog is *very young;* and, if you find he is not turning out as you could wish, seal his fate at once. The dog you want must be mute as a badger, and cunning as a fox: he must be of a most docile and biddable disposition—the generality of this breed are so: they are also slow and heavy in their movements, and phlegmatic in their temper—great requisites; but when fowl are to be secured, you will find no want either of will or activity, on land or water. The accompanying woodcut may serve to show the sort of dog I mean, being a likeness of the best I ever saw. He never gives a whimper, if ever so keen, and obeys every signal I make with the hand. He will watch my motions at a distance, when crawling after wild-fowl, ready to rush forward the moment I have fired; and in no one instance has he spoiled my shot. I may mention a proof of his sagacity. Having a couple of long shots across a pretty broad stream, I stopped a mallard with each barrel, but both were only wounded: I

sent him across for the birds; he first attempted to bring them both, but one always struggled out of his mouth; he then laid down one, intending to bring the other, but whenever he attempted to cross to me, the bird left fluttered into the water; he immediately returned again, laid down the first on the shore, and recovered the other; the first now fluttered away, but he instantly secured it, and, standing over them both, seemed to cogitate for a moment—then, although on any other occasion he never ruffles a feather, deliberately killed one, brought over the other, and then returned for the dead bird.

The only other essential to the sportsman is a glass; one of the small pocket telescopes will answer best, as it is of great importance to be able to set it with one hand, while you hold your gun with the other, and the distance of a mile is all you want to command.

Having now equipped our wild-fowl shooter, we will again bring him to the shore. His first object should be to see his game, without being seen himself, even if they are at too great a distance to show signs of alarm. To effect this, he must creep cautiously forward to the first point that will command a view of the shore for some distance; then, taking out his glass, he must reconnoitre it by inches, noticing every tuft of grass or stone, to which wild-fowl asleep often bear so close a resemblance, that, except to a very quick eye, assisted by a glass, the difference is not perceptible. If the loch be well frequented, he will most likely first discover a flock of

divers, but must not be in a hurry to pocket his glass, until he has thoroughly inspected the shore, in case some more desirable fowl may be feeding or asleep upon it. I will suppose that he sees some objects that *may* be wild-fowl. Let him then immediately direct his glass to the very margin of the loch, to see if any thing is moving there; should he find it so, he may conclude that it is a flock of either duck, widgeon, or teal; those first perceived resting on the shore, and the others feeding at the water's edge, of course not nearly so conspicuous. If there is no motion at the margin of the loch, he must keep his glass fixed, and narrowly watch for some time, when, if what arrested his attention be wild-fowl asleep, they will, in all probability, betray themselves by the motion of a head or the flapping of a wing.

He must now take one or two large marks, that he will be sure to know again, as close to the birds as possible; and also another, about two or three hundred yards, immediately above, farther inland. Having done this, let him take a very wide circle, and come round upon his inland mark. He must now walk as if treading upon glass: the least rustle of a bough, or crack of a piece of rotten wood under his feet, may spoil all, especially if the weather be calm. Having got to about one hundred yards from where he supposes the birds to be, he will tell his retriever to lie down; the dog, if well trained, will at once do so, and never move. His master will then crawl forward, until he gets the advantage of a bush or tuft of

reeds, and then raise his head by inches to look through it for his other marks. Having seen them, he has got an idea where the birds are, and will, with the utmost caution, endeavour to catch sight of them. I will suppose him fortunate enough to do so, and that they are perfectly unconscious of his near approach. He must lower his head in the same cautious manner, and look for some refuge at a fair distance from the birds, through which he may fire the deadly sitting shot. After crawling serpent-like to this, he will again raise his head by hair-breadths, and, peeping through the bush or tuft, select the greatest number of birds in line; then drawing back a little, in order that his gun may be just clear of the bush for the second barrel, after having fired the first through it, will take sure aim at his selected victims. Should he unfortunately not find an opening to fire through, the only other alternative is by almost imperceptible degrees to raise his gun to the right of the bush, and close to it; but in doing this the birds are much more likely to see him and take wing. Never fire *over* the bush, as you are almost certain to be perceived whenever you raise your head: more good shots are lost to an experienced hand by a rapid jerk, not keeping a sufficient watch for stragglers, and over-anxiety to fire, than by any other way. Having succeeded in getting the sitting shot, the fowl, especially if they have not seen from whence it comes, will rise perpendicularly in the air, and you are not unlikely to have a chance of knocking down a couple more

with your second barrel; but if they rise wide, you must select the finest old mallard among them, or whatever suits your fancy. Directly upon hearing the report, your retriever will rush to your assistance, and having secured your cripples, you will reload, and taking out your glass reconnoitre again; for though ducks, widgeon, &c., would fly out upon the loch at the report of your gun, yet the diver tribe, if there are only one or two together, are perhaps more likely to be under water than above when you fire; but more of them anon.

Another invariable rule in crawling upon ducks, is always, if possible, to get to leeward of them; for, although I am firmly of opinion that they do not wind you like deer, as some suppose, yet their hearing is most acute. I have seen instances of this that I could hardly otherwise have credited. One day I got within about sixty yards of three ducks asleep upon the shore; the wind was blowing very strong, direct from me to them, a thick hedge forming my ambuscade. The ground was quite bare beyond this hedge, so I was obliged to take the distant shot through it: in making the attempt, I rustled one of the twigs—up went the three heads to the full stretch, but when I had remained quiet for about five minutes, they again placed their bills under their wings; upon a second trial, the slight noise was unfortunately repeated; again the birds raised their heads, but this time they were much longer upon the stretch, and seemed more uneasy. Nothing now remained but to try again;

my utmost caution, however, was unavailing, and the birds rose like rockets. I never hesitate concealing myself to windward of the spot where I expect ducks to pitch, feeling confident that unless I move they will not find me out. I have often had them swimming within twenty-five yards of me, when I was waiting for three or four in line, the wind blowing direct from me to them, without perceiving by any signs their consciousness of an enemy's vicinity.*

When the weather is very hard, and ducks are driven to the springy drains, a simple way of getting fair shots, but seldom practised, is, to make your man keep close to the drain, and take your own place fifteen yards from it, and about forty in advance of him. The ducks will then rise nearly opposite to you. To walk along the drain is not a good plan, as they will generally rise either out of distance or very long shots: and if you keep a little way off, they may not rise at all. When the loch is low the sportsman may often get a capital shot at ducks, the first warm sunny days in March, as they collect on the grassy places at the margin, to feed upon the insects brought into life by the genial heat.

* Perhaps the sportsman may ask what it signifies whether wild-fowl are aware of your approach by hearing or winding? My answer is, that although it is of little consequence when crawling upon ducks, yet when lying concealed, expecting them to pitch, it is a considerable advantage to know that you will not be detected by their sense of smell; otherwise the best refuge for a shot must often be abandoned for a much worse.

But to return to our wild-fowl shooter, whom we left glass in hand looking out for divers. He sees a couple plying their vocation fifteen or twenty yards from the shore, about half a quarter of a mile from where he stands. He selects his vantage ground as near as possible for a last look before commencing his attack. Having gained this, he makes his dog lie down, and peeps cautiously until he sees the birds—waits till they both dive together, then rushing forward whilst they are under water, again conceals himself, expecting their reappearance. The great difficulty is always to keep in view the exact spot where the birds come up: once lose sight of it, your progress is stopped, and, in recovering your advantage, the birds are almost certain to see you and fly. When within one race of the divers, cock both barrels, and as soon as they *together* disappear, rush to the nearest point on the shore for a shot. If the day be calm, the rising bubbles will show where they are; you can then clap your gun to your shoulder, ready to fire. Always, in such cases, shoot on wing, and be sure to fire well forward: should a diver only be winged, it is useless to tire your retriever in pursuit; but if he is at all struck about the legs also, a good dog should be able to secure him.

So much for the small morillon. The golden-eye is a still more artful bird, and requires more caution. If, without seeing an enemy, he is at all alarmed while diving near the shore, he will probably swim out to a

considerable distance; reconnoitring all the time, and making a noise something like a single note of the hurdy-gurdy. You may perhaps expect his return, and wait for him; but although he may remain about the same place, making these calls, and apparently careless, he is all the time very suspicious; and I only once or twice, in my whole experience, knew him return to the spot where he was first discovered. Should he get sight of you, there is no hope, even if he does not take wing, which he most likely will. The little morillon may return, if you think him worth waiting for; but he is so hard and coarse on the table, that it would be paying him too great a compliment. The golden-eye, on the contrary, is a great delicacy—a sufficient proof, I think, were there no other, that morillons are not young golden-eyes, as many suppose. When several are diving together, you must get as near as possible without alarming them; and, selecting a couple who dive at the same moment, hoot away the others, who will be far out of reach before their companions come up. They will probably never miss them until they have taken two or three dives, thus giving you an opportunity of getting the shot; of which you would have had a much worse chance while they were together.

Of all wild-fowl, a flock of dun-birds is the most agreeable to the sportsman's eye. They are the most stupid of all the diver race: I have even seen them, after having been driven from their feeding-ground,

return in the face of the shooter, who had only lain down without any covering or concealment whatever: they have begun diving again within thirty yards, and of course given him a capital shot. I never wish for assistance in manœuvring for any other kind of water-fowl, but these may be herded like sheep; and, if feeding on one side of a bay, you have only to conceal yourself at the other, and send your man round to where they are diving. They will most likely come straight towards you, and, again beginning to feed, will probably every five or ten minutes draw all together with their heads up. Now is your time to fire, if you have the good fortune to be within shot; but should you prefer two birds in the hand to waiting for their knitting together, you may have a capital right and left when they come up from diving: I, however, should be loath to lose the opportunity of the sitting shot.

There are many other divers that frequent our lochs, such as the tufted and scaup-ducks, &c., but they may all be approached in the same way as the golden-eye and morillon; none are so shy as the former. Those that feed on fish, such as the goosander, speckled diver, sheldrake, &c., require rather different tactics. To get a shot at any of these, you must watch which way they are feeding, and, taking your station somewhat in advance, wait until they pass you: they will not keep you long, as they are very rapid in their movements. Take care that the water is pretty deep where you place yourself, or

they may dive at too great a distance from the shore for a shot; but, after all, they are good for nothing but to be stuffed for a collection.

The only other bird that requires a separate notice is the mighty hooper, monarch of the flood. To get a shot at the wild swan is the great object of the sportsman's desire: he is not naturally so shy a bird as the wild-duck, but still his long neck, and acute sense of hearing, render great caution necessary. If, as often happens, he is feeding along the shore, you have only to plant yourself in an advantageous situation a good way ahead, and it will not be long before he makes his appearance; but if he is feeding at the mouth of some brook or stream, you must crawl in the same way as when after wild-ducks. Should you get within a distant shot of a hooper, and are not close to the water-side, instead of firing from where you are, rush down to the edge of the loch, and before the swan can take wing you will have gained ten yards upon him. When the thaw begins after very hard weather, they are almost sure to be feeding at the mouths of any mountain burns that run into the loch. Should you see hoopers strong on the feed, nearly out of range of your gun, in place of taking the random shot, try to prevent their being disturbed, and return at dusk of evening or grey of morning, when they will most likely have come pretty close to the shore, especially if any little rivulets run into the loch near—this rule applies to most water-fowl. If a swan be alarmed by an enemy on

shore, his wont is not to fly, but to swim majestically away.

Widgeon and teal are approached in the same way as wild-ducks, only the widgeon are less shy than the ducks, and the teal than the widgeon. You may sometimes, in calm weather, see widgeon in a large flock purring and whistling a couple of hundred yards from the shore; you need give yourself no trouble about them, as they will probably not leave their resting-place until they feed in the evening. Always try to get a heavy shot at widgeon, which, with a little patience, you may generally accomplish. Teal are usually in small flocks; so that, if you can get two or three in line, you had better fire, for fear of losing the sitting chance altogether. I once killed six at a shot; but, except when they collect in small ponds and drains about the loch-side, so good an opportunity seldom occurs. I have occasionally seen shovellers on our lochs; but only in the hardest winters. They resemble wild-ducks in their habits—the only one I ever shot was among a flock of ducks.

As an instance of what may be done by patience and caution, I may conclude this paper by mentioning, that the gamekeeper of a relation, having seen a flock of ducks pitched upon the shore, and no way of getting near them but over a bare field, crawled flat upon his face a distance of three hundred yards, pushing his gun before him, not daring even to raise his head, and at last got within such fair distance, that he stopped four with

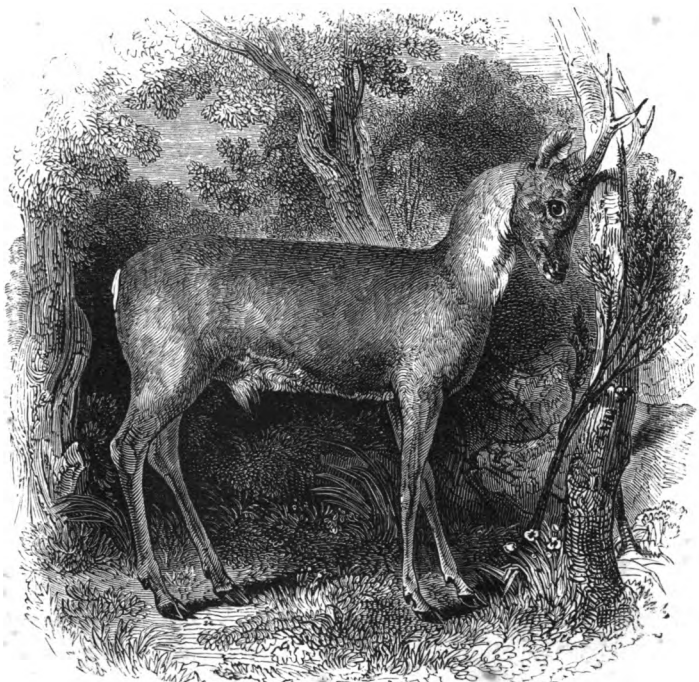
his first barrel, and one with the other, securing them all. His gun was only a small fowling-piece. I should add that he had been trained to deer-stalking, under his father, from a boy.

THE ROE:

HABITS, MANNER OF SHOOTING, ETC.

MANY of the woods that fringe our most romantic lochs and glens abound with the roe; its chief food being the leaves in summer, and the tender tops of the trees in winter. I do not mean to say that it is not also fond of grass or clover, but the other is its most natural choice. So destructive is it to young woods, that many gentlemen give it no quarter on this account. Even trees of considerable growth are not safe from its attacks; the buck sometimes fixing his horns against the stem, walking round and round until the ground is bared, and the bark so injured that the tree dies. The favourite haunts of the roe are those belts of young plantation, surmounted by large pine forests, common throughout the Highlands; the former supply it with food, and the latter give it shelter.

The pursuit of the roe, if followed in a proper way, affords first-rate sport, and taxes to the full the strength, skill, and energy of the hunter; but this is seldom the case, and the generality of roe-hunts are nothing but blunders from beginning to end. The common way of



ROEBUCK CLEANING HIS HORNS.

proceeding is, to place half-a-dozen gentlemen with their guns in the passes, and then, with a host of beaters and dogs, to scour the plantations, always commencing at the windward side, where the roes are sure to be found. I confess I have no great liking to this plan; the plantations are thoroughly disturbed, almost every head of game being driven out; and I never saw a party of this kind succeed much better than when one or two experienced roe-hunters had the whole sport to themselves.

A description of one of these noisy parties will, with a few exceptions, apply to all. We will suppose the sportsmen snugly in their passes, while the beaters and dogs are in full hoot and howl in the wood below; one man allows the roe to slip by unobserved, until it is almost out of reach, then fires his buck-shot, perhaps wounding his game, which the dogs are unable to run down; another never sees it at all; a third shows himself in the pass, and so throws away his chance; and I have even known two instances of our brethren from the south leaving their posts for a time to take a comfortable luncheon—their love of a roe-pasty prevailing over their love of the chase. One of them was only detected by the hounds and roe having run right through his pass during his absence. Although a man should not be so churlish as to refuse joining a party of this kind, yet I could excuse any knowing roe-hunter for anticipating with greater pleasure and hope of success the day when he should take the field alone.

Such a one will always prefer a day with scarcely a breath of air, high wind being destruction to his sport: first, from the difficulty of hearing the hound; and next, from the currents of air which he will be obliged to avoid, lest the roe should wind him. His only companion is a very slow and steady hound. Thoroughly acquainted with all the passes, he places himself in that he considers the best, ready to change his position should the baying of the hound seem to indicate that the roe has taken a different direction. If it escapes at the first burst, he is not at all disconcerted, as his tactics now begin. The roe perhaps stretches away into the large pine forest, and he sees his good hound slowly and surely threading his way through the thick underwood, making the welkin ring. Now is the time for our sportsman to display the strength of his lungs and limbs. Aware that the roe, after a fair heat, will probably slacken his speed, and with the hound scarcely more than a hundred yards behind, course slowly round and round a knot of hillocks, perhaps for half an hour at a time, he will use his utmost efforts to keep within hearing of the bay. Whenever this appears nearly confined to one place, he advances with extreme caution, peering round at every step, with his gun cocked and held ready to fire. The sound seems now at hand—again more distant, as it is obstructed by the intervening hillocks; he conceals himself upon an angle of one of them, near the centre of the knot, to command as good a view both ways as he can. If the

hound continues opening near, he watches with the utmost vigilance, almost holding his breath to catch the slightest sound. After waiting some time, should the dog still remain near, he will occasionally shift his position, but always with the same caution.

A novice would scarcely believe the noiseless step with which a roe will often pass, and the scanty covering of brushwood that will screen it from observation. Should it slip by in this manner, you will of course immediately know by the tracking of the hound, which has often made me aware of its almost magical transit. Attention and experience, however, will considerably lessen the roe's chance of escape. Whenever it takes another direction, follow at your best speed, until it again tries the dodging game. Continue the pursuit so long as your hound is stanch, and your own strength holds out, taking advantage of every pass within and round the wood.

Here let me give two cautions: always to dress as near the colour of the ground and trees as you can, and when concealed never to make the least motion; if you do, the roe will at once perceive it and stop short. You will most likely only be made aware of its having done so by the hound coming within forty or fifty yards, and then turning away in another direction. When properly dressed, even should your place of concealment not be very good, the roe will be pretty sure to pass *if you keep perfectly still.* This is even more necessary when expecting a hill-fox. Should the roe take a straight course,

right out of your beat, you must await its return, which, if it has not been alarmed or shot at, you may pretty confidently expect.

In recommending the above manner of roe-shooting, it must be remembered that I do not say it is easy; but I do say that, when thoroughly understood, it will be attended with much greater success in the long run, and the roes will be less disturbed, than when many of the passes are kept by novices in the sport. I once, in Kenmure wood, at the head of Loch Lomond, by this mode killed two in a few hours, one of them a very fine old buck, without harassing any others; while a party of five or six of us, and beaters to correspond, after alarming the whole wood, and firing many shots, only got three yearling fawns in four whole days.

Many gentlemen have a great prejudice against allowing hounds to enter their covers, for fear of driving the roes away, when the blame should rather be laid on their large party, unskilful manœuvring, and long random shots. I have had good proof that roes are not so much afraid of fox-hounds as people suppose. A gentleman of my acquaintance had a newly-planted wood much injured by them: he desired the gamekeeper to hunt them out; so little, however, did this frighten them, that they have been known to return within an hour after the hounds were taken off, nor would they leave the place until one or two had been shot.

Nor is this the only instance which has come within

my own notice. On the shooting-ground which I took for a season at Kinnaird, in Perthshire, was a pine wood, with an oak copse at the side; here I frequently saw a fine buck and two does feeding. They were very tame, and I tried in vain to beat them out with the shepherd's dogs. I had not then much knowledge of roe-hunting; but I procured an old hound, and pursued them every day for a week without getting a shot. They were still to be found in their old haunts every morning, although ever so hard hunted the day before. They would take a stretch upon the open moor for an hour, and then return, always keeping together: and it was only by marking a much-used pass that I at length succeeded in getting a very fair right and left, killing the buck with one barrel, and one of the does with the other. A stray shot struck the other doe, which happened to be in line, and broke her leg, although I was not aware of it. Two days after, a farmer sent me word that a wounded roe had been seen in the wood. I again put the hound into the cover, and in a short time the poor creature came limping past, when I shot it, to prevent the dog from putting it to a more cruel death. I do not mention this as claiming any merit, for the shots were open, near, and easy; greater skill might have secured them some time before: but I think a fair inference in proof of my assertion may be drawn from this and other instances of the kind.

The roe's sagacity in discovering real from apparent danger is remarkable: the crouching shooter with his

deadly gun is instantly detected, while the harmless workman may even blast the rock and cause no alarm. This fact I have been assured of by men employed on the Highland road, who had often seen the roes peeping at them from the cliffs above, watching their whole proceedings without any signs of fear.

The roe has no great kindliness to the fallow deer. It is a curious fact, that on Loch Lomond there are two large wooded islands which the roes constantly haunt, without ever crossing to a third, where deer are kept, though well adapted to their habits. When swimming in and out of these islands, the roes have regular passes as on land, but if a boat be near they will never attempt to cross. A few years ago, an English gentleman wishing for a couple, a plan of catching them in the water was thought of; for this purpose, boats were concealed near the passes, and the roes hunted out of the islands: but they were such dexterous swimmers, and doubled so well, that they always escaped, until the thought of fixing a noose to a pole suggested itself, by which simple device they were soon secured. In a short time, they became quite domesticated, and would eat from the hand of their keeper.

Another was caught many years ago, which my brothers and I, when boys, begged to be allowed to tame. We used to bring it leaves in great quantities, which it would eat from our hands, always preferring those of the mountain-ash. The confinement, however, did not agree with

it; and, although supplied with grass, clover, and every thing we could think of, it fell off in condition, and we were obliged to set it free.

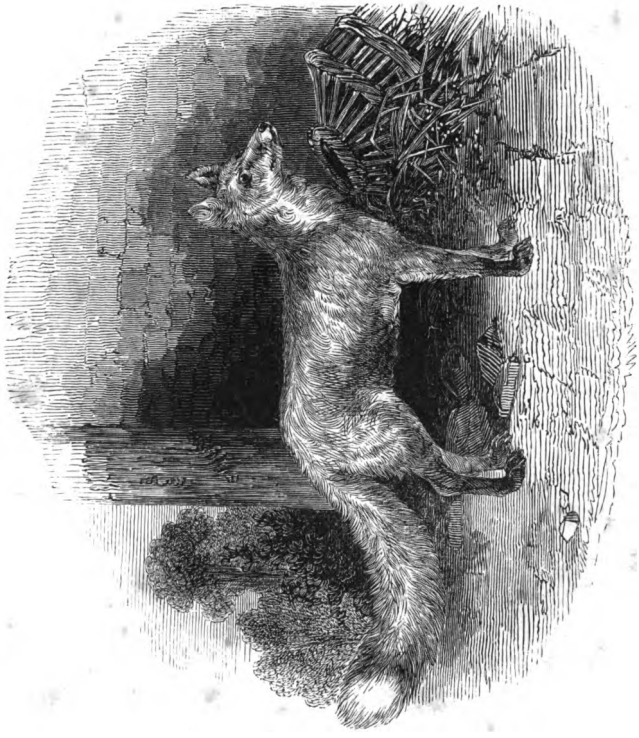
The roe has two young ones at a time, the most beautiful little creatures possible. It is curious to see them, when started, bound away with the greatest activity, though no bigger than a cat.

THE MOUNTAIN-FOX.

Occasionally, while ranging for roes, the hounds come on the track of a hill-fox; they will then show even more than their usual keenness, and open with greater ardour. As the same passes often serve for both, the roe-hunter has sometimes an opportunity of shooting this wily destroyer. Such a chance only occurs when prey is scarce on the mountains, and he leaves them to seek it in the woods below; I therefore do not recommend having a charge of smaller shot in one barrel—a plan adopted by some.

Any one who sees the hill-fox bounding along within fair distance, will immediately be struck with the difference of his appearance from that of the small cur, which never leaves the low grounds. The mountain-fox is a splendid-looking fellow; even the sneaking gait of the enemy of the poultry-yard has, in a great measure, left him; he seems to feel that he breathes a freer air, and lives by more noble plunder. He is extremely destructive to all game within his range, and the havoc he makes among the hill-lambs is a serious loss to the farmer. He will also not unfrequently attack and destroy full-grown sheep. To prevent the increase of

MOUNTAIN FOX.



CUR FOX.

these freebooters, a man is appointed for each district of the Highlands, called "the fox-hunter," whose business it is to search out and destroy the young litters, in which he is ably seconded by the farmers and shepherds.

The place selected by the mountain-fox for rearing its young, is widely different from that of his pigmy relation of the Lowlands. Unlike the latter, who chooses an old badger-earth or drain, in the midst, perhaps, of a pheasant preserve, the hill-fox prefers some wild and craggy ravine, on the top or side of a mountain, far removed from the haunts of men. In spring, these places are all narrowly searched by the shepherds, and the den (for you cannot call the clefts of the rock an earth) often detected by the quantities of wool, feathers of grouse, &c., scattered about the entrance. These are the remains of prey brought to the young; for as soon as they are able to eat flesh, the old ones leave them during the day, bringing them food morning and evening.

When the litter is discovered, "the fox-hunter" is brought into requisition, (who often at this time has more calls than he can answer;) his terriers are sent into the den, and the young massacred; a watch is then set to command a view all round, in order, if possible, to shoot the old ones when they return. I have been told by people thus employed, that they had no idea of the proverbial cunning of the fox until they saw it shown upon such occasions. Although the place has been per-

fectly bare, the old ones have come unperceived within ten yards of the party, and were at last only discovered by the straining of the dogs on the leash. I have often heard the watchers say, that the ease with which "the tod" avoids their faces, and skulks behind their backs, is most surprising. If the foxes escape the guns, as they commonly do, "the streakers" * are slipped upon them, and, if not then run down, nothing remains to be done but again to set the watch. So long as the old ones are prevented from entering, they will return morning and evening for several days; but, should either of them get access, and miss the young, they come back no more. At those times of the year when there are no litters, the usual way of hunting is to place a man, with a streaker or greyhound ready to slip, upon the tops of the neighbouring hills; the fox-hunter then draws all the corries, crags, &c., where they haunt. Should Reynard be started, he is almost sure to take a course over the top of one of the hills where the men are posted. He comes up all blown, and, if observed, (which, I must say, is seldom the case,) has a fresh streaker slipped upon him, which ought to run him down.

I may here give an account of a hunt I had with one of my brothers, after as fine a mountain-fox as ever prowled upon the wild moor. We had gone on a roe-hunting

* A breed between the largest size of greyhound and foxhound. Some of them are swift, very savage, and admirably adapted for the purpose.

expedition to a high and steep hill in Dumbartonshire, the lower part of which was an oak and larch copse, the centre a large pine-wood, and the top covered with long heather. After choosing our passes between the pine-wood and copse, we sent a first-rate old hound to draw the latter; scarcely had it been in the cover ten minutes, when it opened upon a cold scent, and continued puzzling for a considerable time. As this was not its wont when upon a roe, we half suspected a fox: presently the scent warmed, and in a short time the hound opened gaily. Our hopes were high, as it came straight in the direction of our passes. In a moment I heard my brother fire; and the baying of the hound ceasing shortly after, I concluded the shot had taken effect, and walked off to see what he had killed. When I had gone a little distance, I met him running and calling to me to get into my pass again, as he had shot at an enormous fox in the thickest part of the cover; and as it had doubled back, which had occasioned the check, it would most likely try my pass next. I wheeled about at full speed, and arrived just too late for a deadly shot. When within seventy yards of the pass, the fox was bounding over the stone wall that divides the copse from the pine-wood, and presenting his broadside, a very distant but clear and open shot. I discharged both barrels, and watched narrowly to see if he was hit; the ground was level for a short way, and no abatement of his speed was perceptible; but as soon as he began to climb the hill, a labour-

ing motion at once told that one of us had wounded him. Without stopping to load, I ran to see if there was blood upon the grass, and when thus engaged, the hound, which had recovered the track, came up full cry. I had no choice left but to breast the hill, and, if possible, keep within hearing of the dog. Panting and breathless, I could hear the bay more and more distant, and was just beginning to fear that the fox's object was the savage ravines of Glen-Douglas, when it ceased on a sudden. Encouraged by the hope that he might be run down, I redoubled my exertions, and, after scrambling a mile and a half from where I fired, saw the hound at check, at the top of the pine-wood where it joins the heather. I made several unsuccessful casts above; and then, thinking that, unable to climb the hill, he had returned to the shelter of the wood, I was making a circle below, when he sprung out of the heather, not thirty yards off, and ran straight down the hill, his lagging and staggering gait showing that he had got his death-wound. I would now have given a good deal had my gun been loaded; but not a moment was to be lost, as the hound viewed the fox, and was again full cry. I dashed over stock and stone, but it was not long before there was another pause in mid career. When I came up the ground was perfectly bare, not a furze-bush to cover a rat, and the hound completely at fault. I had just taken out my powder-flask to load, when, from no other concealment than the bare stem of a fallen fir-tree, the fox a second

time burst out, as fair a shot as I could wish. The hound was close to his brush, so back went my powder-flask into my pocket, and I rushed down the steep with reckless desperation. The bay became fainter and fainter, my head grew dizzy, I had run a distance of three miles on one of the steepest hills in Scotland, and had just given up hope of another check, when I heard a woodman's axe. More by signs than words, I made him comprehend that he must follow the dog as long as he was able; sat down to rest for a moment, and then loaded my gun. No sound was now to be heard; the whole wood seemed as if it had never been disturbed. I shouldered my gun, and was proceeding, as I thought, in the direction of the chase, when I met my brother, who had from the first taken a different route, in order to intercept the fox at another point. We proceeded together in search of hound and woodman, but for a long time unsuccessfully; at last we thought of returning to the place where I first found him at work. Our delight may be imagined, when we saw the hound tied up, the woodman smoking his pipe, and the fox lifeless on the ground, a perfect monster. The man's account was, that after following a considerable way, and being nearly distanced, there was a sudden check; when he came up, he found the fox dead, the hound standing over him, without having touched a hair—he had run till his heart was broken. We sent this magnificent fox to be stuffed at the College Museum, Glasgow: those who had charge

of it told us they had never seen one nearly so large, and many who came on purpose to see it were equally astonished at its size. It is now in my possession; and the woodcut shows most correctly the difference between it and a very fine specimen of the poultry-fox, shot in my brother's preserves. The brush of the larger fox is not longer than that of the smaller, and less white on the tip, but it is uncommonly thick and bushy. He stands very high upon his legs, which are exceedingly muscular; his head is very broad, and his nose not nearly so peaked as the other's; his coat is also much more shaggy, and mixed with white hairs—an invariable mark of the hill-fox, and which makes his colour lighter and a less decided red than the fox of the Lowlands.

THE WILD-CAT.

THE wild-cat is now rare in this country. Although I have spent a great part of my life in the most mountainous districts of Scotland, where killing vermin formed the gamekeeper's principal business, and often my own recreation, I have never seen more than five or six genuine wild-cats. Many, on reading this, will perhaps wonder at my statement, and even give it a flat contradiction, by alleging the numbers that have come under their own notice. Nay, I was even gravely told by a gentleman from the south of England, a keen observer and fond of natural history, that there were wild-cats there,* and the skin of a cat killed in one of the southern counties was sent to me as a proof; this, I need hardly say, was the large and sleek coat of an overgrown Tom, whose ancestors, no doubt, had purred upon the hearth-rug.

I am far from meaning that there are no cats running wild in England; of course, wherever there are tame cats, some of them, especially the very old ones, will

* I have been frequently assured that wild-cats have been killed on the Cumberland and Westmoreland hills; but, never having seen any specimens, I cannot speak from my own knowledge. There is no doubt that martins exist in some of the most hilly and wooded districts of England.

forsake their homes, and live by plunder in the woods. These may also breed; but their progeny, though undomesticated, will always be widely different in habits, in appearance, in strength, and in ferocity, from the true cat of the mountains. I have seen no less than thirty of these *naturalized wild-cats* trapped in a single preserve in the Highlands; some of *them* might have been mistaken for the genuine breed. The colour in both was pretty much alike, but there were other points which clearly showed their domestic origin. They were, in fact, a cross between the wild and tame cat. I have seen many of this kind stuffed in museums and collections, as fine specimens of the wild-cat, and believed to be so even by those who might have known better.

The unerring marks of the thorough-bred species are, first, the great size,—next, the colour, which does not vary as in the domestic animal, but is always a dusky gray, brindled on the belly and flanks with dingy brown—hair long and rough,—the head exceedingly broad,—ears short,—tusks extremely large. Another very distinguishing point is the great length and power of the limbs. It stands as high as a good-sized dog. But perhaps the most unfailing mark of all is the tail, which is so long and bushy as to strike the most careless observer. In the males it is generally much shorter than in the females, but even more remarkable, being almost as thick as a fox's brush.

The woodcut is taken from the largest female that has

It should be observed that the Wild-cat is crouching a little, which takes off from its height, while full effect is given to that of the Tame.

ever been killed in Dumbartonshire, and most correctly shows the difference of its size from that of a full-grown house-cat. It was trapped on the banks of Loch Lomond in the depth of winter, having come down to the low ground in quest of prey. The bait was half a hare, hung on a tree, the trap being set immediately under. The person who went to inspect it thought, when at a little distance, that a yearling lamb was caught. As he came near, the cat sprang up two or three feet from the ground, carrying the large heavy trap as if scarcely feeling its weight. He would have had great difficulty in killing it, had he not dodged round the tree when aiming a blow. I have seen two males bearing the same proportion to this specimen, both in size and fierceness of aspect, as an old half-wild Tom to a chimney-nook mother Tabby. One of these was shot by a gamekeeper, when on a grouse-shooting expedition, in a very remote range; the other was trapped near the top of a high mountain.

Except in the depth of a very severe winter, the wild-cat seldom leaves its lone retreat. Nothing comes amiss to it in the shape of prey; lambs, grouse, hares, are all seized with equal avidity. The female fears nothing when in defence of her young, and will attack even man himself. She generally rears them in rocky clefts and precipices. I saw a couple of young ones that were killed in one of the mountain cairns; they were nearly as large as a house-cat, although not many weeks old. It was curious to see their short tails, and helpless,

unformed kitten look, contrasted with their size. Several attempts were made to shoot the old one, but she was never seen; probably, upon missing her young, she forsook the haunt.

The wild-cat has seldom more than three or four young ones at a time—often only two.

THE MARTIN.

THIS beautiful connecting link between the fowmarte * and the cat is not a native of this country. It was imported, I believe, from America, and is pretty generally dispersed over the wild and wooded districts of Scotland. It has none of the offensive odour of the fowmarte, and even more alertness and activity than the cat. Running at a little distance, it looks exactly like a giant weasel. In some the breast is nearly white, whilst in others it is a bright orange, which has given occasion to the supposition, that they are varieties of the species; but I have no doubt they are the same. Of the many I have seen trapped or shot, I always remarked that the male was darker in the colour, and his breast almost white; that of the female was orange, and the fur lighter brown. I had a male and female stuffed that were trapped together at the same bait, exactly answering to this description.

When pursued, the martin, although its legs are so short, can run faster than a cat; this it does by a succession of springs, for which its long body gives it a great advantage. As a last resource, it will climb

* The name Fowmarte is a Scottish corruption from the Teutonic Ful, *fetid*, and Merder, *a martin*.

trees, and spring from one to another, like a squirrel. I once, with two or three companions, had a curious hunt of this kind. The martin had been driven by a very swift terrier into a clump of pines, which it so nearly resembled in colour, that we had great difficulty to keep sight of it. At last we thought of cutting off its retreat by climbing all the adjacent trees: the creature showed great coolness when thus driven to extremities, awaiting the approach of its enemy, perched on the pinnacle of the tallest pine; and it was only when one of our party got quite close, that it sprang from the top to the bottom of the tree, rebounding nearly a yard from the hard turf, just where I was standing, and, not a whit disconcerted, darted off at full speed, gained a precipice, and made good its escape.

Unless hard pressed, however, the martin is more apt to go to earth, or take shelter in the clefts of the rocks, than upon trees. When run to ground by a fox-hound, there is no creature more easily smoked out; it will bolt almost immediately, and numbers are killed in this manner, although, from the quickness and uncertainty of its exit, it is any thing but an easy shot.

When in quest of prey, it is daring as well as mischievous; not so apt to leave its secure haunts in the day-time, but under cover of darkness will travel many miles, committing great devastation in preserves; and, unless trapped or shot, will return night after night to the poultry-yard, killing many more fowls than it de-

vours. One of these marauders had nearly made a clear sweep of my father's poultry: it kept peering over the perch with the greatest impudence, and could scarcely be driven thence by the dairymaid: no sooner was she out of sight than it would return. One of the farm-servants at last procured a trap, and having set it without art or covering, the loud screams of the robber presently made known his capture.

The martin generally selects a magpie's nest in the thickest pine-tree, and there rears its young; hence it has obtained the name of pine-weasel. One, however, was brought me that had its litter in the thatch of an old barn; it was detected by a dog, driven out, and shot: the young were rather smaller than kittens, and quite as sweet and clean.

If seized by the breast, the martin, like the cat, is easily killed by a good dog; but the skull is so hard, that I have seen one, when released from a trap with all its legs broken, roll away upon the ground, after receiving half-a-dozen hard blows on the head from the keeper's cudgel. This animal being easily trapped or run down, is not nearly so numerous now as it was some years ago.

LOCH-FISHING.

THE true angler is almost always a lover of nature; if not, he loses half the pleasure of his art. In following the river's course, he must of necessity pass through the finest and most varied scenery; and that, too, at a time when beauty crowns the year. But, enchanting as are the woodland banks of the quiet stream, there is to me a higher and yet more powerful charm in the solitary wildness or savage grandeur of the Highland loch. The very *stillness* of those bare hills and craggy summits, broken only by the rushing of some rapid burn that intersects them, has a tendency to elevate, while it calms the mind; and I envy not the man who could frequent such scenes and not feel them.

But if the proficient in the gentle craft has an eye equally keen to the beauties so lavishly scattered around him, it happens no less often that the admirer of nature's wildest charms fancies himself an angler. Our man of taste has, perhaps, fished a few rivers near him, in the spring, when trout are lean and hungry; and, having chosen a propitious day, has sometimes returned with a tolerable creelful. He then starts on his pleasure-tour, and of course his fishing-rod forms an important

accompaniment. At first, he makes some determined attacks upon the finny tribe; but, being generally unsuccessful, his rod is laid aside, and, after having been delighted with the sublimities and beauties of half the Highlands, he returns home with but an indifferent account of his piscatorial achievements. To such an one I particularly address the few simple directions in loch-fishing, which time and patience have enabled me to collect.

There are particular times in every season when trout more readily take in many of the Highland lochs, and these it should be the angler's first study to discover. For instance, the best time for trolling with the minnow, in Loch Vennachar, is from the end of February to the middle of May, when large fish may be taken. They never rise well at the fly in this loch. In Loch Lomond, the trolling does not begin till May, and only lasts till the middle of June, when the fly-fishing commences. More may then be caught, but, with the exception of sea-trout, seldom nearly so large as with the minnow. In Loch Katrine, you may troll with success all the season. The fishing in Lochs Earn, Lubnaig, and Voil, is not good till May: the trout in those lochs being small, they are never trolled except for the gillaroo, which inhabits them all, and sometimes grows to a great size. The trouting in Loch Ard is best at an early part of the year, falling off very much as the season advances; while Lochs Chon and Dhu, not so good as Loch Ard at the

beginning of it, are much better afterwards. In short, a number of the lochs in the Highlands may, at certain times, be either fly-fished or trolled with greater success. There are also some which may be fished either way throughout the season; the angler's judgment determining which, as wind, water, and sky suggest. These, if inhabited by pike, are my particular favourites, especially when the greater part of the shore is so clear of weeds as to make one independent of a boat.

Many people think a loch injured by pike: on the contrary, unless very numerous, as in Loch Menteith, I have seldom seen one much worth fishing without them; always excepting those where the Loch Awe trout or gillaroo are to be found. If a man prefers killing eight or nine dozen, with scarcely a half-pounder among them, to a dozen fine trout from one to three pound weight, then he may count the pike his enemy; but the latter feat will both better prove his skill and afford him much greater sport. He who wishes to excel in angling, will leave the loch with its tiny multitude to the bungler, and select the other, where all his science will be called into play.

The reason why yellow trout are always large where there are pike, is obvious: the small fry are all devoured by the latter, and the others, having more food, increase in size. A few years ago Loch Katrine was choke-full of very small trout, which have gradually become larger

since pike have been introduced; and now, two or three dozen fine red trout may be taken in a day.

There are two other small lochs, near Loch Katrine, which breed very large pike, and are full of prime trout, Loch Arklet and Loch Dronkie; but less fortunate than their neighbours in not having been immortalized by our Great Minstrel: the latter especially, from its ill-sounding name, we cannot wonder that a poet discards, but an angler will find its attractions. The shores of these lochs being almost clear of weeds, and the ground firm, the best parts may be reached by wading, and fish taken from half-a-pound to three pound weight. Upon one occasion, when playing a good-sized trout in Loch Dronkie, an enormous pike made several dashes, and at last succeeded in seizing it. I used every effort to frighten him away; but so determined was he, that, though I could see him quite plainly in shallow water, with my trout held across his tremendous jaws, he would not be beat off; and at last when, kicking the water, I strained my line, he gave a plunge, broke my rod, and escaped with his prey.

FLY-FISHING.

The flies I have generally found best for loch-fishing are a light speckled, or brown mottled mallard wing, according to the day; reddish-brown mohair body, red hackle, and No. 7 hook, tied with yellow silk, for a trail; and a teal-wing, claret-colour mohair body, black hackle, and No. 6 hook, tied with orange or yellow silk, for a

bob. If the loch is full and muddy, add a small thread of silver tinsel to the latter, and increase the size of both; in large lochs, a green body is also very killing. In fishing a loch where the trout are small, diminish the size of your hook; even in river-fishing, I seldom use any but those I have named, only much smaller and without the mohair; adding a hare's-ear body and woodcock wing early in the season, and a mouse body and snipe wing at a later period.

Should the loch you are fishing contain sea-trout or salmon, ascertain, from any good fisher in the neighbourhood, what are the most killing flies, and tie them for yourself. Should you not be "up to this," *beg, borrow, or buy them from him.* In fishing with a long line, from a boat, let the trail be either a sea-trout or salmon-fly; but if throwing from shore, never use the latter except by itself. A two-handed rod, large reel with plenty of line, and the lightest tackle, are necessary.

If the wind is so high as to cause decided waves upon one of these small lochs, you will succeed much better with the minnow-tackle than the fly: indeed, the best plan then is to troll for pike, with a par; they always take best in high wind, but are so capricious, that you may have three runs in half-an-hour, and, perhaps, not one in several apparently favourable days. High wind is prejudicial to fly-fishing in lochs where the trout are large, because it scatters them into unlikely places; and being, of course, much fewer in number than when small,

you are not so apt to stumble upon them: the waves also prevent their seeing the fly so readily.

When there is a fine even breeze, immediately repair to the loch. Begin to fish those parts where the wind blows fairest from the shore; if you know the loch well, you have a great advantage. The trout have many feeding places, and shift from one to another with the slightest change of the wind. Near some one of these they generally keep watching the breeze, which blows them flies and insects. They are usually in companies; so, when the angler hooks one, he should endeavour to get it away from the rest; he will then most likely rise another the next throw or two. He must keep a very sharp look-out for these places, and may generally detect them by the rising of the trout. They sometimes, but not so often, feed singly.

When a fish takes the fly, raise your arm with a sort of *indescribable* turn of the wrist: if this is done with a *jerk*, the fly is whipped away from the trout, but, if omitted altogether, it will often make its escape, after feeling the hook. It is for want of knack in this particular, that so many trout are lost after having risen to the fly. When you hook a good fish that never shows above water, but swims low with a dead heavy pull, be very cautious; it is most likely tenderly hooked, and, with the least strain upon the line, will break away.

The shore in many parts of the lochs is fringed with weeds, beyond which you may cast by wading.

Should you hook a trout in such a situation, and not find an opening to lead it through, use every endeavour to keep it from the weeds; and when quite tired out, raise its head above water, and tow it rapidly over them. If you can reach beyond the weeds with your landing-net, the difficulty in a great measure ceases.

When salmon or trout spring out of the water, you may be sure that neither will *be so apt to rise to your fly*, whether in lochs or rivers.

THE MINNOW-TACKLE.

In fishing for trout with the minnow, I also prefer a moderate breeze, unless in bright sunshine, when more wind is necessary. Your tackle should be the very best single gut, dyed with strong tea, or any thing to take the shine off; a No. 13 hook, and two No. 8's tied back to back: two swivels are enough, and no lead on the line. Any one with the least knowledge of angling knows how to bait. The large hook enters the minnow's mouth and is brought out near the tail, which is curved in order to make it spin; one of the others is passed through its lips. A fly-top makes the minnow spin more lively, and is therefore preferable to a bait one—the rod-makers will say the reverse. In river-fishing, another branch and couple of small hooks fastened to the gut, and fixed in the minnow's side, are often used; but I do not recommend them for the lochs.

The best, although most tedious way of casting, is to

gather the line with your right hand, and, letting the minnow hang down about a yard, throw it out, shifting the rod at the same time from the left hand to the right; you can thus make further casts, and the minnow lasts twice as long. If the wind is high, try all the sheltered bays; you may then often hook a fish where you would otherwise have had little chance. Sink the minnow a few inches below the surface, and when you see or feel a bite, slacken your line a little; when you strike, it must be done with much more force than in fly-fishing.

When trolling from a boat, the less the breeze the longer the line; sink it with lead to a considerable depth. In baiting, use a No. 9 hook through the minnow's lips, and a 13 or 14 through the tail (*vide* cut). You thus

bait much more quickly, and the minnow's appearance is not so apt to be injured; its tail can also be curved up, more or less, to make it spin true. Thus baited, you may troll with it from a boat for half a day; but if you attempt to cast, it will very soon be thrown off. Always take with you two coarse trolling-rods, that you do not mind sinking in the water, and very large reels with plenty of line, or oiled cord, if you wish.

Your boatman should be well acquainted with the ground; but if not, endeavour to troll between the shallow and the deep, where the trout are on the out-look. Find out if there are any sunk rocks or banks, and troll round them also. Always sweep past the mouths of any rivers or brooks; they are very likely places, either with minnow or fly.

Troll as much as possible with the wind, although in fly-fishing it is best to row against it. Take care, when you hook a fish, that your boatman does not strain your line in the former case, nor slacken it in the latter; either of which he is apt to do, by lying upon his oars, watching your proceedings. You must, in fact, direct his slightest movement.

If the loch is frequented by salmon, have one of your rods baited with a par; and, if passing any of his haunts near the shore, take your fly-rod, land, and throw from it, but do not go near the place with the boat. Should no fish rise, after you have thrown some time, take off your fly, put on a large bait-hook, and two floats, one about six yards from the other; the line is thus prevented from dangling near the hook, which must hang down about four yards from the last float, baited with two large dew-worms in the following manner:—Enter the hook at the tail of one, and bring it out about one-fourth of an inch below the head; pull up the worm upon the gut; then put in the hook about one-fourth of an inch below the head of the other, leaving the same length of

worm at the point; this moves about, and entices the salmon; pull down the first worm to the other, and your hook is baited, (*vide* cut.) When the float disappears, be

in no hurry to strike till the fish has *tightened* the line; you are thus pretty sure of its head being turned away, and, consequently, have a better chance of hooking. This should only be attempted where the shores are deep and rocky, on a cloudy day, with a stiff breeze from the south or west, and skiffs of rain. Do not give up hope too soon, for the salmon are generally swimming in small shoals backwards and forwards along the shore; a little time may thus elapse before they pass where you are fishing.

In trolling with par for Loch Awe trout, salmon, or the gillaroo, use double, or even triple gut, well dyed; a couple of swivels are quite enough, and a very heavy lead. Bait in the same way as when trolling with minnow from a boat, only the hooks must be considerably larger to suit the par. Should the weather become calm, you may often hook a large cunning fish by waiting till dusk of evening, letting out a very long line, and sinking your rod in the water, with the but against your shoulder. The biggest fish are always on the search for food at this

time; and, perhaps, the most killing bait is a loach—also excellent for large perch, some of which I have caught, when trolling, upwards of three pound weight.

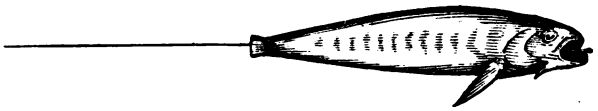
TROLLING FOR PIKE.

The common way of rod-fishing for pike in the Highlands, is with a running-bait—a par, or small trout, and plenty of hooks, tied back to back on gymp, stuck all round it; also a couple of large swivels, and the line a little loaded with lead. They always take best mornings and evenings, except on very windy days; so, if the angler is inclined to try a cast for a pike, after having filled his creel with trout, he may begin about six o'clock.

THE GORGE-TROLL.

Trolling with the gorge is often very deadly in weedy lochs, especially small openings that cannot be fished with the running-bait. I have seldom, however, seen it used in Scotland, except in a very clumsy way—a large double hook, armed upon wire, with the bait inverted, and no attempt to make it spin: unless pike are in a very hungry mood, this is not very enticing. The proper gorge-hook is a small double one, commonly used for eels, with very sharp barbs, slightly turned inwards; the shank loaded with lead, in order to make the bait sink quickly, and enable you to make far casts with precision. This hook is fastened by a small brass ring to about a

foot of gymp: (you require a baiting-needle:) after cutting off the tail and all the fins but one of the topside ones, hook on the loop of the gymp to the needle, and insert it at the mouth of the bait, bringing it out at the middle of the fork of the tail: the lead, and shank of the hook, will thus be hid in the mouth and belly of the bait, and only the barbs and points visible. Tie the tail to the gymp with thread. (*Vide* cut.) After casting, let



the bait sink to the bottom, then draw it to the top, and the single fin will make it spin beautifully. When a pike seizes, you must not be in a hurry to strike, or you have small chance of hooking: let out your line with your hand, give him sufficient time to gorge the bait, and then he is fast and firm as you could wish. Use a coarse trolling-rod, with large strong rings, and reel of oiled cord—no swivel is required. Some use a large gaudy fly for pike; I never do so, and do not recommend it, although I have sometimes caught small pike even with a common trout fly.

It is much more easy to find out the haunts of pike than those of trout. The best places are in and near the weedy bays. Fish all these with the running-bait, and if possible, by wading, cast immediately beyond the weeds,

between the shallow and the deep water; this, however, the sinking mud will often prevent your accomplishing. If you have found the pike on the feed, you may return over the same ground with the gorge, trying all the openings among the weeds that you could not fish with the running-bait. I never troll for pike from a boat, unless they cannot be reached any other way.

SET-LINES FOR PIKE.

Although rod-fishing for pike affords undoubtedly the best sport, and requires much greater skill, yet by far the most deadly way is with set-lines. This is either done with a long line, and from twelve to twenty hooks, or with single hooks, fixed to a bottle or other equally buoyant float. I have also heard of tying baited hooks to the legs of geese, and turning them adrift: when a pike seizes the bait, the goose begins to flap its wings, and there is often considerable sport in the struggle; but it is certainly a most cruel diversion, especially if a large pike is hooked. The humane man will be more amused with the float, which I have often practised with great success.

After very tightly corking up the bottles, and fastening the cord to them, let from five to eight feet hang down, according to the depth of the water; fix a large double pike-hook, armed upon brass wire, and baited with a small perch, trout, roach, or frog to each: be sure to cut off the perch's dorsal fin and lower part

of the gills. The baits are inverted, the barbs of the hook projecting from their mouths. The best time for this amusement is on one of those delicious evenings with scarcely a breath of air, when the shadow of the mountain becomes more imposing on the unrippled loch, and twilight begins to steal over the scene. Let the hum of the beetle be your warning bell.

Having arranged all your tackle, and baited your hooks, place them *regularly* in a light two-oared boat, and row to the weedy bay. You will now drop them one by one, about twenty yards apart, outside the weeds, between the shallow and the deep. The pike have been basking all the sultry day in the shallows, and are just emerging from their green covering in search of food. The first object that arrests their hungry eyes and craving stomachs is your tantalizing bait, suspended at such a distance from the surface as to excite no apprehension, and perfectly still. With avidity it is seized and pouched; down goes the bottle: scarcely, perhaps, has it disappeared, when another follows its example: it is nothing uncommon to have four or five all bobbing up and down at the same time. The sport now begins, the angler stretching to his oars, first after one, then another, as they alternately rise and sink. If large pike are hooked, they will often keep their tormentor under water for a minute at a time; and *to run the whole down* is no contemptible evening's exercise.

THE LONG-LINE FOR PIKE.

In setting a long-line for pike, fix branches of small whipcord to it, about a yard in length, and three yards apart from each other; the same hooks, as described above, appended to them, and baited in the same way. The line is set in a like situation to the floats, in the following manner:—After driving a pole into the mud, fasten the end of your line to it. Your companion will now row leisurely along, whilst you lift out hook after hook, until you come to the end of the line; having done so, fix it to another pole, and drive this also into the mud. Do not make the line too "taught," or it will not hang low enough for the pike; no floats are required. The line may remain all night, and has thus the morning and evening chance.

EELS.

As lines for eels are, of course, set at the bottom, a short description of the way to do so may be necessary. Fasten a stone to the end of the line, to which also append a branch with a float—the same at the other end—the line thus lies flat upon the ground, the floats showing exactly where. Eels may be set for in rather deeper places than pike; but be sure there is a soft muddy bottom. Both hooks and baits must be a great deal less than when setting for pike, the former armed upon strong wire. Cut the fish, or whatever you bait with, into small

pieces, just large enough to cover the hook, and fix them firmly on. I recollect catching five or six beautiful eels at one haul, with no other bait than two frogs; the legs set upon some of the hooks, like worm, and the bodies, cut into several pieces, for the others. The drawing of an eel-line, what with twisting and slime, is often sorry work; if a large swivel was appended to each hook, it would both tend to prevent this and increase the chance of success. It is of little use to set single hooks for eels, as the great likelihood is that the first that comes may have a mouth too small for sucking in your hook, *but large enough to devour your bait;* in fact, there are twenty small for one large; and from a line of three dozen hooks, it is a very good night's work to kill half-a-dozen large eels.

I have thus given an outline of the different kinds of fishing in fresh-water lochs, except perch, which *float and worm recreation*, as it has come under the ban of Dr Johnson, I might leave the novice to find out for himself. All he has to do is to ascertain their haunt, which any one in the vicinity can show; fasten a float to his line, and a No. 10 hook—bait with an earth-worm—throw in without art, and give the fish time to gorge the bait before striking, or it may slip out of its capacious mouth after being sucked in.

FISHING ON THE SALT-WATER LOCHS.

THE sea loch has a character peculiarly its own—no wooded islands, no green or pebbly margin, like its inland sister, except perhaps for a short time at full-tide; and the dark mountain more often rises abruptly from its side in craggy and bold relief. It is a novel sight for the traveller, whom the refreshing evening breeze has tempted out of the neighbouring inn, at the landlord's recommendation, to try his fishing luck with such a clumsy rod and tackle as he had never dreamt of before. The awkward-looking herring "skows," well-matched with their black or red sails, scudding in all directions; the nasal twang of the Gaelic, as they pass the bow or stern of his boat, shooting their nets; the hardy, weatherbeaten face of the Highlander, always civil in his reply, and courteous in pointing out the most likely ground to the "stranger" —reiterating his injunctions (when his stock of English extends no further) "to keep on the *broo*," yet plainly showing that he expects the like courtesy in return, and that the least slip on your part would immediately make him change his tone,—all this can hardly fail to impress on the mind of the imaginative, that the spirit of

the Highlands, though dormant, is not dead, and to carry back his fancy to the old times of clans, catarans, and claymores.*

The fishing of the sea-loch is not nearly so scientific as that of the inland. The great art lies in being thoroughly acquainted with the best state of the tide for commencing operations—in having a perfect knowledge of the fishing ground, and being able to set your long line with neatness and despatch. Having lived for a couple of years on the banks of two sea-lochs,

* It is often amusing to see how easily the warm blood will boil, even in those whom years and hardship might have cooled. The following characteristic instances occur to me:—A spruce young gentleman and party of friends, in crossing a ferry, had only one boatman, nearly eighty years old, tugging away at both oars. The young spark, who rather piqued himself upon his performance, offered to relieve him of one. "Na, na," says old Donald, whose manner was the extreme of respect, "ye'll no be accustomed to this wark." "Me!" says the youngster, "I'll row any man in your country." The Highlander instantly faced him with a look and tone of perfect equality—"I've seen the day when ye wad hae been sair pushed!" The other case was that of an old "grannie" in defence of her rights and privileges:—An efficient and benevolent magistrate, who had been very active in his endeavours to stop the progress of the cholera, was inculcating the necessity of cleanliness. Grannie listened with a sort of half-consenting air, which seemed to say—"we must submit to all this for the good that's to come"—until he mentioned the necessity of removing the dunghill from before the window. Her Highland blood could not endure so audacious an inroad upon her freedom: she determined to make a stand upon this odoriferous ground, proverbial for inspiring pluck even into the craven. With an attitude of defiance, and her fists firmly stuck in her sides, she bawled out—"Deed, Major, ye may tak our *lives*, but ye'll no tak our *midden!!*"

I had every opportunity (which I did not neglect) of practising the different kinds of fishing, and making myself master of the most propitious times of the tide for doing so with success.

TROLLING FOR SEA-TROUT

may be ranked at the head of this fishing; but, before attempting to describe it, I shall mention two curious facts, relative to the sea-trout and salmon, which it is difficult to account for. One is, that the former will take greedily in one loch, while you may troll a whole day in its next neighbour, though full of them, without getting a single bite. This was precisely the case in the two lochs alluded to. The other, that, although you may see the huge tails and back-fins of salmon rising all round, I never heard of one taking the bait; and during the whole of my trolling in the salt water, I have only killed one grilse. This is the more strange, as the salmon is not at all shy of the spinning-bait in the fresh water loch.

The best time to begin fishing for sea-trout is at the turn of the tide, when it begins to ebb: the same rod and tackle as when trolling from a boat in fresh water. The herring-fry, salted, are the most killing bait, (also excellent for large fish in fresh-water lochs,) although minnows are very good: a sand-eel may also do, the black skin pulled over the head, so as to show nothing but the white body; this shines very bright, but

as it does not spin, is far less deadly than the others. A boatman who thoroughly knows the fishing-ground is indispensable, as it is much more difficult to find out than in the fresh water. Strong eddies, formed by the tide, are often good places; also any bays, especially if mountain burns run into them. The largest size of sea-trout are caught in this way; and when hooked, from the depth and *strength* of the water, make capital play. Large lythe also are frequently taken: these are like passionate boxers—fight furiously for a short time, after which they are quite helpless.

If there is a good pool at the mouth of any mountain burn, by going with your fly-rod during a "spait," or coming down of the water after heavy rain, *and when the tide is at the full*, you may have excellent sport. The trout are all floundering about, ready to take your fly the moment it touches the water. This only lasts for a short time, as they all leave the pool at the receding of the tide. I say nothing of sea-trout or salmon-flies, which vary so much in the different lochs, rivers, and streams, that every angler should be able to dress them for himself. Any fishing-tackle maker will be happy to teach him *for a consideration*. He has then only to learn from an approved hand near, what flies are best for the loch or stream he intends to fish, and tie them accordingly.

THE LONG-LINE.

The eel-line, already noticed, is precisely the long-line in miniature, with the exception of the hooks, which are such coarse, blunt-looking weapons, that the wonder is how they catch at all. They are sold for a mere trifle at any of the shops in the sea-port towns, and tied on with a wax end, but sometimes only with a knot of the twine itself: a turn of the wire on the shank enables you to do this. A baiting basket is required, one end for the line, the other for the baited hooks, which are placed in regular rows. My line had only three hundred hooks, but some have double that number. Herring, cut into small pieces, are the best bait: I required about a dozen for one setting. The best substitute for these are mussels; but they drop off the hook so easily, that when herring can be procured they are seldom used. Seeing the long-line baited, set, and drawn, will thoroughly teach any one who has an idea of fishing—*writing* how to do so, never will. It generally took me about an hour and a half to bait mine; so I taught a boy, who, after two or three lessons, could bait as well as myself.

The best time to set the long-line is after low water, when the tide has flowed a little, and brought the fish with it. To know the different "hauls"* is most

* Banks, and parts of the loch, where the shoals of fish frequent.

important, as your success, in a great measure, depends upon the selection of a good one. After the line is set, *it should be left exactly one hour;* and, if you have hit upon a shoal, you will most likely half-fill the boat. I have several times killed about a dozen, from twenty to fifty pound weight, besides quantities of smaller. The fish for the most part taken are cod, ling, haddock, skate, large flounders, and enormous conger-eels, some of the latter more than half the length of your boat, and as thick as a man's leg. These would generally be thrown back again, were it not for the havoc they make among the other fish, and the damage they do to the set-lines. Their throats are, therefore, cut as soon as they are pulled up, after which operation they will live for hours. The skate is also very tenacious of life; and nothing can be more absurd than the grotesque, pompous faces it will continue to exhibit for some time, after being deposited in the boat. The round shape of its jagged crown is exactly like a judge's wig; and when it puffs out its cheeks, the whole face and head so forcibly remind one of those learned lords, that you almost fancy you hear it pronouncing sentence upon the devoted congers. The conger, if dressed like other fish, is uneatable; but when the oil is taken out, by parboiling, some people prefer it to cod. Care should be taken to untwist the line as much as possible when drawing it, which saves a deal of trouble afterwards. There is generally so much filth and discomfort in the

whole business, that gentlemen seldom care to engage in it, except a few times from curiosity.*

THE HAND-LINE.

When a boy, I used to be much delighted with the hand-line, and never failed to practise it as opportunity offered. It is simply a piece of whalebone fastened cross-wise to the line, and a hook at each end, tied upon strong gut, with a heavy lead in the centre. This lead sinks the line rapidly to the bottom, which it no sooner touches than you feel it strike. You are thus enabled to keep moving the hooks a yard or two up, and then sink them to the ground again, which entices the fish. All the art of the hand-line is to pull up *the instant* you feel a bite, and never to slacken till the fish is safe in the boat. Keep changing your ground, and dropping your anchor, unless the fish seem taking. Mussels are the best bait; and it is a good plan to throw a few into the water, as well as the empty shells.

* Thunder is generally believed to be destruction to fishing of all kinds—and so it often is. I, however, know an instance, when a friend of mine set his long-line just before a tremendous storm, which raged the whole hour it was in the water. As soon as it cleared, he rowed to his line, with no hope of success for that day: to his astonishment it was perfectly loaded with heavy fish. Something similar happened to myself, when going to fish the Almond, near Edinburgh. I was overtaken by a thunder-storm when close to the river; directly upon its subsiding, I commenced fishing, and at the second or third throw hooked a fine trout. After a few hours I returned home, having had excellent sport.

Hand-line fishing may be followed at any time, but is best at the flow of the tide. As the water retires, shift your position further down the loch, and *vice versâ*. Almost every cottage on the banks can supply a hand-line, and every inmate knows how to use it.

THE WHITE FEATHER.

To some *highly facetious* authors, a pun upon the white feather might prove a prize, so I shall make them a present of it instead of my readers, and proceed to its dressing and use. Of all apologies for a fly, this is the clumsiest; it is only a swan's or goose's feather tied round a large and very coarse bait-hook, without the least pretence to art; any man who had never dressed a fly in his life, would be as successful in the attempt as the most finished performer.* The rod and line are in perfect keeping with the fly; a bamboo cane, or young hazel tree, with ten or twelve yards of oiled cord, and a length

* Worsted is occasionally used instead of the feather, and it is sometimes a killing way to have a different colour for each rod—viz. white for one, yellow for another, and red for a third. This last is best for mackerel; and in some states of the water and sky, both lythe and seithe, especially the former, prefer the yellow to the white. It is a curious fact regarding the seithe, that when it grows old it changes both its nature and appearance; the colour is nearly black instead of the rich green; it grows to a great size, and gains a formidable set of teeth. It is then called a stanlock, or black salmon, and is quite as destructive to other fish as the conger-eel. In this stage it is never known to rise to the fly, but it is occasionally taken by the hand or long-line.

or two of double or triple gut next the hook: no reel is used.

The fish generally caught in this way are lythe and seithe, although mackerel will rise freely also: when fishing for the former, good double gut may be strong enough, but if large fish are expected, I should always recommend triple. Seithe take best in the morning and evening, and a slight breeze is rather an advantage: although the fly is sometimes sunk a little with lead, it is more often fished with at the top. You may begin at any state of the tide, and row over all the sunk banks and places where the fish frequent, at a slow rate, with three or four rods placed regularly in the stern of the boat. When a small seithe is hooked, pull it in at once, and out with the rod again as fast as possible: sometimes nearly all the rods have a fish at the same time. In lythe fishing you need not launch your boat till low water; sink the fly with a couple of buck-shot, and troll on the brow, where it descends perpendicularly; this is easily seen at that state of the tide. When you hook a large fish, try to prevent it getting down, or you may be obliged to throw the rod overboard, in case the lythe should break away; but, if you can manage to swing it about at the top for a short time, it will soon be unable to offer any resistance.

Trolling with the white feather has this recommendation, that it may be enjoyed by an invalid or party of ladies—and, certainly, a more delightful way of spending

the cool of a summer evening cannot be imagined—rowing slowly along those romantic shores—hearing the distant gurgle of the dwindled mountain brook in its steep descent, and ever and anon passing the blue-curling smoke of a shepherd's or fisherman's grass-topped cottage on the banks.

I have now, I think, given all the *necessary* instructions in fresh-water and sea-loch fishing; and feel confident, that by following them the admirer of "flood and fell," even if a beginner in angling, may return from his fishing tour, having as often filled his creel from their depths as gratified his taste with their scenery.

ON EAGLES.

Few sportsmen, who have been much in the wilds of Scotland, have not occasionally seen an eagle; but, except at the hatching season, it is extremely difficult to get a shot at one. Even then it is no easy task, for the nest is often in the face of some precipice which few dare to scale.

The golden-eagle is not nearly so great a foe to the farmer as to the sportsman; for although a pair, having young ones, will occasionally pounce upon an unprotected flock, and continue their depredations until scared away, the more usual prey consists of hares, rabbits, and grouse: a fact sufficiently proved by the feathers and bones found in their eyries. A pair used to build every year in Balquhidder, another in Glen-Ogle, and a third in Glenartney. The shepherds seldom molested the old ones; but by means of ladders, at considerable risk, took the young and sold them. One of these, brought to Callander, not long ago, when scarcely full-fledged, would seize a live cat thrown to it for food, and, bearing it away with the greatest ease, tear it to pieces: the cat unable to offer any resistance, and uttering the most horrid yells. From the havoc they made among

the game, especially when they had young, the keepers in the neighbourhood have been very diligent of late years in searching out the eyries, and trapping the old birds; so that now, in this part of Perthshire, there is not one for three nests that there were formerly.

I recollect, some time ago, an eyrie in Glen-Luss, where a pair hatched yearly; but since the female was shot, no others have haunted the place. The shooting of this eagle was a service of great danger, and the man who undertook it a most hardy and determined fellow. The cliff was nearly perpendicular, and the only way of access was over the top, where a single false step would have sent him headlong into the gulf below. After creeping down a considerable way, he saw the eagle sitting on her eggs, a long shot off; but his gun was loaded with swan-shot, so, taking deliberate aim, he fired: she gave one shrill scream, extended her wings, and died on her nest. His greatest difficulty now was, how to avail himself of his success. He was not, however, the man to be baulked: so, at the most imminent risk, he managed to get to the eyrie, tumbled the eagle over the cliff, and pocketed the two eggs. They were set under a hen, but did not hatch. Had they been left, the male would, probably, have brought them out, as he has been often known to do in similar cases. I afterwards broke one of the shells, and was quite astonished at its thickness.

A fair shot may sometimes be got at the male when there are young ones in the nest, as he will often swoop

down in their defence—at any other time, he is the most shy and wild of birds. I only know of one instance to the contrary, and that was in the depth of a very severe winter, when the creature was rendered desperate by hunger. The gamekeeper of my late father was shooting wild-fowl, and having killed one, sent his retriever to fetch it out of the water. The dog was in the act of doing so, when an eagle stooped down, and seizing him, endeavoured to carry off the duck: it was only by shouting with all his might, that the keeper could alarm the eagle so far as to make it fly a little clear of the dog, when he shot it with his second barrel. The scuffle took place only twenty yards from where he stood, and he told me that he thought the eagle would certainly have drowned his dog.

When two eagles are in pursuit of a hare, they show great tact—it is exactly as if two well-matched greyhounds were turning a hare—as one rises, the other descends, until poor puss is tired out: when one of them succeeds in catching her, it fixes a claw in her back, and holds by the ground with the other, striking all the time with its beak. I have several times seen eagles coursed in the same way by carrion-crows and ravens, whose territories they had invaded: the eagle generally seems to have enough to do in keeping clear of his sable foes, and every now and then gives a loud whistle or scream. If the eagle is at all alarmed when in pursuit of his prey, he instantly bears it off alive. Where alpine hares are

plentiful, it is no unfrequent occurrence, when the sportsman starts one, for an eagle to pounce down and carry it off, struggling, with the greatest ease: in this case, he always allows the hare to run a long way out of shot before he strikes, and is apt to miss altogether. When no enemy is near, he generally adopts the more sure way of tiring out his game.

The colour of the golden-eagle differs very much some are so dark as almost to justify the name of "the black eagle," which they are often called in the Highlands—in others, the golden tint is very bright; and many are of an even muddy-brown. I do not think that the age of the bird has any thing to do with this, as I have seen young and old equally variable. The sure mark of a young one, is the degree of white on the tail: the first year the upper half is pure, which gradually becomes less so by streaks of brown—about the third or fourth year no white is to be seen.

THE SEA-EAGLE.

I have not had an opportunity of noticing the habits of the sea-eagle, never having been for any time in the neighbourhood of its haunts. All my information regarding them, is derived from watching one or two tame ones which I met with in Ireland, where they are more numerous than in Scotland, whose mountains are the grand resort of the golden-eagle. The prey of both seems pretty much alike, except that the sea-eagle is

fonder of dead carcasses, which may in part account for its partiality to the sea-shore. Those I allude to devoured crows, jackdaws, livers, fish, or almost any carrion that was thrown to them. Their eyries are mostly in the precipitous cliffs on the coast.

The sea-eagle is rather larger than the golden, and of a lighter brown. The bill, which is longer and broader, but not so hooked as the other, is of a dull yellowish white. The whole of the tail-feathers of the young ones are brown, when they gradually change to white, which is complete about the fourth year—the very reverse of the golden-eagle. The tail is also shorter, and the legs are not feathered to the toes, like the other; but quite enough to show that the bird was not intended to subsist by fishing, like the osprey, whose legs are bare to the thighs, which have only a thin covering of short feathers.

THE OSPREY.

The osprey, or water-eagle, frequents many of the Highland lochs; a pair had their eyrie for many years on the top of a ruin, in a small island on Loch Lomond. I am sorry to say I was the means of their leaving that haunt, which they had occupied for generations.

It was their custom, when a boat approached the island, to come out and meet it, always keeping at a most respectful distance, flying round in very wide circles until the boat left the place, when, having escorted it a considerable way, they would return and settle on the ruin.

OSPREY, OR WATER EAGLE.

Aware of their habit, I went, when a very young sportsman, with a gamekeeper, and having concealed myself behind the stump of an old tree, desired him to pull away the boat. The ospreys, after following him the usual distance, returned, and gradually narrowing their circles, the female, at last, came within fair distance—I fired, and shot her. Not content with this, the gamekeeper and I ascended the ruin, and finding nothing in the nest but a large sea-trout, half-eaten, we set it in a trap, and returning, after two or three hours, found the male caught by the legs. They were a beautiful pair: the female, as in most birds of prey, being considerably the largest—the woodcut is a most correct likeness. The eggs of these ospreys had been regularly taken every year, and yet they never forsook their eyrie. It was a beautiful sight to see them sail into our bay on a calm summer night, and flying round it several times, swoop down upon a good-sized pike, and bear it away as if it had been a minnow.

I have been told, but cannot vouch for the truth of it, that they have another method of taking their prey in warm weather, when fish bask near the shore. They fix one claw in a weed or bush, and strike the other into the fish; but I never saw them attempt any other mode of "leistering" than that I have mentioned: when they see a fish, they immediately settle in the air—lower their flight, and settle again—then strike down like a dart. They always seize prey with their claws, the outer toes of which

turn round a considerable way, which gives them a larger and firmer grasp. Owls have also this power, to enable them with greater certainty to secure their almost equally agile victims; while the fern-owl has the toe turned round like a parrot, to assist it in the difficult task of catching insects in the air. But if this were the case with the others, although it might be an advantage in the first instance, it would very considerably weaken their hold when prey was struck.

I remember seeing another pair of ospreys on Loch Menteith, that had their eyrie on the gnarled branch of an old tree. They became so accustomed to the man who lets boats there, that the female never even left her nest when he landed on the island, unless a stranger was with him. Once, when he returned home after a short absence, he saw one of them sitting on the tree, making a kind of wailing cry: suspecting all was not right, he rowed to the island, and found the female was missing, and the nest harried. They have never hatched there since: the male has been frequently seen, but he has never found another mate. When they had young, they did not confine their depredations to Loch Menteith, but used to go, in quest of prey, to the other lochs in the neighbourhood; and, in the evening, would fly down the glen, carrying a fish a foot long in their claws.

The nest of the osprey is lined with coarse water-plants and grasses: the outside fenced with thick boughs,

some of them four inches round, and three feet and a-half long: proof enough of the strength of its legs and wings. The eggs are as large as a hen's, with reddish-brown spots. The osprey is about the size of the herring-gull; the breast nearly white, spotted with brown; back and wings dull-brown; the thighs very muscular; legs and claws, which are of bluish flesh colour, equally so.

THE KITE.

ALTHOUGH abounding in the mountainous regions of Scotland, the kite is not confined to them: I have frequently met with it in the Lowlands, and it is common in Wales. To look at the elegance of its form and the grace of its movements, the keenness of its eye, the strength of its wings, and the aptitude of its claws for seizing prey, one would suppose the kite to be a very mischievous bird; but none of the hawk tribe are less so: even the buzzard, albeit no great adept, is much its superior in the art of destruction. The kite has no quickness of flight, yet is admirably fitted for his mode of life. Subsisting in a great measure on carrion and reptiles, his keen eye and unwearied wing are of the greatest service in discovering his food. Fish, when he can get it, he considers a dainty morsel, and may be most successfully trapped with this bait. I found out his weak point, by noticing the avidity with which he would devour the refuse of the net the day after a draught. I have watched him with delight, sailing aloft with such perfect ease, that the only perceptible motion was that of his tail,

piloting him like a helm in his aerial circles—scrutinizing, with his telescopic eye, every field and valley where he might hope to find a prey, and then, suddenly lowering his flight and lessening his circles, gradually alight upon some object, so small that it seemed scarcely possible he could have seen it from such a height.

Indeed, were the sight of the blue falcon and hen-harrier equal to that of the kite, their havoc upon our moors would be much greater than it now is; but their manner of seeking food is quite a contrast to his. In beating the ground for prey, they, especially the latter, seldom rise higher than twenty yards; but, when once it is sprung, their activity in pursuit is unrivalled. Perhaps I may here be excused for digressing, so far as to mention an anecdote of the blue or peregrine falcon, showing that it will beat game out of the heather, and destroy it on the ground: many, I know, suppose it never strikes but on wing. When out breaking a young dog upon the Perthshire moors, I put up a grouse, which, after flying some distance, was pursued by a blue falcon. The poor grouse, seeing it had no chance, dropped down in the heather; but it was too late, the hawk was directly above. It immediately alighted, beat about the heather for a minute, and presently the grouse fluttered out before it. I saw the chase for about ten yards, when they ran behind a hillock, and on my going up to the place, the falcon rose, and there lay the grouse decapitated.

But, to return to the kite—he is the shiest of birds; not even in the hatching season can you often get a shot at him. I have frequently found the nests: they are much like the carrion-crow's, only larger and more impervious. They are lined with whatever the birds can pick up—old stockings, worsted gloves, or any thing soft and warm. There are seldom more than three eggs, often only a couple. Kites generally build in the pine forests on the hills and select a tree, with a thin bare stem, often very difficult to climb. I once concealed myself at the foot of a tree where a kite was hatching, in order to shoot it on its return to the nest—for they generally fly off at the most distant approach of an enemy. I was perfectly hid; and, after waiting nearly an hour, had an opportunity of witnessing the tact and cunning of the bird. The sun was shining warm upon the nest, or it would, most likely, not have kept me so long; at last I saw it flying round in very wide circles, which gradually narrowed: it then lighted upon a distant tree, and peering round in every direction, chose a nearer; and so on, until it came within three or four trees of the nest. It was now within shot; but I had, unfortunately, so placed myself as only to command the nest-tree, never doubting that it would light on this before it settled upon the nest—but I was out in my reckoning; as soon as it had tolerably re-assured itself, it rose perpendicularly in the air, and came down upon its nest like a stone. The manner in which I was concealed prevented my getting

a flying shot; so nothing remained but to fire through the nest, which proved a sufficient defence, as the kite flew away, and never returned. A few days after, I climbed the tree with some difficulty, and took two eggs, about the size of a hen's, with dusky-red spots.

THE ALPINE OR WHITE HARE.

THE white hare inhabits many of our mountains. It is not confined, like the ptarmigan, to the tops of the highest and most inaccessible, but, on the contrary, is often met with on grouse-shooting ranges, where there are few crags or rocks to be seen. I have frequently shot it on flats, between the hills, where it had made its form like the common hare; and, though I have more often moved it in rocky places—where it sometimes has its seat a considerable way under a stone—I do not think it ever burrows among them, as some suppose; for, although hard pressed, I have never seen it attempt to shelter itself, like a rabbit, in that way. Indeed, there would be little occasion for this, as its speed is scarcely inferior to the hares of the wood or plain, and it evidently possesses more cunning. When first started, instead of running heedlessly forward, it makes a few corky bounds, then stops to listen—moving its ears about: and, if the danger is urgent, darts off at full speed, always with the settled purpose of reaching some high hill or craggy ravine. If not pressed, it springs along as if for amusement; but takes care never to give its enemy an advantage by loitering.

I put up one, on the 16th of last March, when inspecting the heather-burning on my moor, which (contrary to their usual practice) kept watching, and allowed me, several times, to come within a hundred yards. I was at first surprised, but the explanation soon occurred to me, that it had young ones in the heather. I had thus a good opportunity of noticing the commencement of its change of colour. The head was quite grey, and the back nearly so; which parts are the last to lose, as well as the first to put on the summer dress. I shot one nearly in the same stage, on the 22d of last November. The only difference was, that the whole coat of the former appeared less pure. This is easily accounted for, as in winter the creature, though receiving a fresh accession of hair, loses none of the old, which also becomes white; whereas in spring it casts it all, like other animals. Thus, by a merciful provision, its winter covering is doubly thick; while at the same time, being the colour of snow, (with which our hills are generally whitened at that time of year,) it can more easily elude its numerous foes. The same remark applies to the ptarmigan.

During a mild winter, when the ground is free from snow, the white hare invariably chooses the thickest patch of heather it can find, as if aware of its conspicuous appearance; and to beat all the bushy tufts on the side and at the foot of rocky hills, at such a time, affords the best chance of a shot. The purity, or dinginesss of its

colour, is a true criterion of the severity or mildness of the season. If the winter is open, I have always remarked that the back and lower part of the ears, retain a shade of the fawn-colour; if, on the contrary, there is much frost and snow, the whole fur of the hare is very bright and silvery, with scarcely a tint of brown. When started from its form, I have constantly observed that it never returns, evidently knowing that its refuge has been discovered. It will sometimes burrow in the snow, in order to scrape for food, and avoid the cold wind, as well as for security. These burrows are not easily discovered by an unaccustomed eye; the hare runs round the place several times, which completely puzzles an observer, and then makes a bound over, without leaving any footmark to detect her retreat. It is hollowed out, like a mine, by the hare's scraping and breath, and the herbage beneath nibbled bare.

The alpine hare is a good deal less than the common —shorter, and stouter made for its size—its legs stronger, for climbing in rocky places, and its claws more blunt. Its colour, in summer, is a kind of light fawn, and in winter the tips of the ears, which are much shorter than those of the common species, are jet black.

PTARMIGAN SHOOTING.

It is worth while to make an excursion to the rocky haunts of the ptarmigan, if only for the splendid views they command, and the strange novelty of the scene. Ben-Lomond, Ben-Vein, Ben-Voirla, and, indeed, all that lofty range in the west, are inhabited by these solitary denizens of the mountain-top. Except for this additional motive, however, not many sportsmen would be tempted to ascend them, for the chance of the few shots they would be likely to obtain. Some of the mountains of Ross-shire and Inverness-shire are far easier of access, and the birds much more numerous: as many as ten or twelve brace may there be bagged in a day. Not having had the good fortune to shoot upon them, I can only speak from my experience in the West Highlands. The sportsman who climbs any of the mountains I have named, and falls in with the ptarmigan, cannot fail to observe how well it harmonizes with the scene. Perched upon a ledge of the shelving rock, which it nearly resembles in colour, its wild look seems in contrast with the little dread it shows at the sight of man, who so seldom disturbs its craggy abode. They are even so stupid, that if stones are thrown over the pack, they will sometimes crouch down, in dread of their more

common enemy, the hawk; and, bewildered at the sound of the gun, suffer themselves to be massacred one by one. This experiment, however, more often fails, when they all take wing together at the first stone; and, far from being so slow as many suppose, they are quite as rapid in the air, or even more so than grouse: they will also sometimes take as long flights, although their more common way is to fly round the angle of a rock or precipice, and immediately drop down.

I cannot better describe ptarmigan-shooting than by giving an account of the first day I ever enjoyed this sport, of which I have a most perfect recollection, and also of my last expedition, in company with an English friend, a short time ago.

When fresh from school, the first year I took out a license I went on a grouse-shooting excursion soon after the 12th of August. Having slept at the nearest farm-house to the ground, I started at daybreak for the base of "the mighty" Ben-Voirla, where, I had been told, grouse were plentiful that year. My guide was the game-preserver, a reclaimed poacher, who had as quick an eye for a hare sitting, or a ptarmigan among the rocks, as ever peered from under a shaggy brow. After about three miles' very rough walking, we reached our destination. With eager hope I uncoupled my dogs, who soon came to a dead point; off went both barrels—it certainly was missing in good style!—not even a feather dropped, to hang a peg upon for the exercise of

my companion's ingenuity. All the excuse that his wit or wisdom could frame was—"You've made them leave that, at ony rate!" After two or three *equally successful* points, I began to wish myself well out of it; and, looking up to the stupendous mountain, asked if there was any chance of finding ptarmigan should we climb it. Having small hopes of my performance on wing, and knowing, from experience, that a sitting shot might thus be obtained, he caught at the plan, and we commenced our steep and toilsome ascent. An hour and a half brought us to the first shoulder of the hill, when all of a sudden he stopped, eagerness in every feature, and, pointing in the direction of a large rock, said—"If it was na that I thocht it too low, I would tak my oath that thing on the tap o' the rock is a ptarmigan." I now walked first, and, ducking down into a ravine, came out about sixty yards from our object. Immediately it took wing, and my gun was at the same moment discharged, with, I must confess, scarcely an attempt at aim. To my inexpressible delight, the bird dropped. Heedless of spoiling my dogs, I rushed up, and seized my prize. After carefully wrapping its broken wing in tow, to prevent the blood from soiling the feathers, and giving it in charge to my sharp-sighted friend, I proceeded for a fresh search.

My utmost hope now was to make out the brace, but we toiled to the top of the mountain without seeing another bird. I had sufficient opportunity to admire the care

and skill with which my guide scrutinized every likely spot; passing over the hanging cliffs, by which we were surrounded, with a very superficial glance, he directed his chief attention to the *cairns*, or heaps of rock and stone scattered jaggedly about. All at once I felt his vice-like grasp upon my shoulder, the other hand pointing to one of these cairns, not twenty yards off. I strained my eyes to the utmost, but could see nothing, save the dull gray rock. His impatience grew extreme, and vented itself in loud whispers—"Shoot him sitting!" At last I caught sight of the bird, its head and tail carried low, and colour so like the jutting rock, that it might well have been taken for one of the points—none but an accustomed eye could possibly have discovered it. With eagerness and trepidation my gun was raised—off went the shot—up went the ptarmigan with a hoarse croak—a fine cock! My second barrel followed the example of the first. The bird flew rapidly round the precipice, and with it my last lingering hope! I saw the difficulty of finding them, and despaired of hitting even when found. So we retraced our steps with my solitary bird, which happily served to stop minute enquiries about the day's sport.

Many years elapsed before I again visited Ben-Voirla, but in that time I had taken a leaf out of my instructor's book, and could also trust myself not to throw a chance away when the birds were discovered. I was now accompanied by a friend from the South, a very

good shot, and particularly anxious to see and bring down a ptarmigan.

When we got to the foot of Ben-Voirla, we found that there were two packs on what is called the second top, and were thus saved the trouble of scaling the highest. So, taking two young farmers as guides, we reached the ground after a stiff climb. On ranging one side of the mountain, just as we were turning round to the other, the dogs ran into a small pack, which jerked round an angle and were out of sight in a moment. I knew their flight would probably be a short one, so began to look about with the utmost caution: my friend, quite a novice in this sport, had no idea of finding the game himself, and continued to hunt the dogs with great assiduity. We happened to be pretty near together, when they again "poked up" a ptarmigan. Neither of us thought of each other, or the ordinary rules of shooting, but fired at once, and down came the bird. This was rather unsatisfactory, as the "honour and glory" belonged to neither; however, we determined it should not happen again. I described what places the birds were most likely to haunt, and cautioned against trusting to the dogs, which were quite unaccustomed to such ground; but finding my companion preferred his own plan, I left him, and commenced my slow and wary search. At last I caught sight of a ptarmigan upon the very ridge of the hill, about thirty yards above me. It was in the same crouching attitude before described, and, had I attempted

to put it up, would have dipped out of my sight in an instant. I was therefore obliged to shoot it sitting; but the moment I fired, another flew straight over my head, his hoarse croak proclaiming the cock of the pack! I had a fair shot, and down he dropped. The first I killed being a hen, they made a capital pair for my collection.

I was now very anxious my brother-sportsman should have a good chance; so, joining company, we scrutinized the ground on every side, without success; only one bird was put up out of all distance, which my friend determined to follow. So, agreeing to meet at the foot of the hill, we took different ranges. Fortune again declared in my favour; for, just as I was scrambling with hand and knee up a steep precipice, a pack of four rose upon the very top, and flew into mid air, just giving me time to steady myself, cock my gun, and get a distant shot, when one of them dropped into the gulf below. I sent my guide to fetch it, which he acccomplished with some difficulty; and then dispatched him in quest of my less successful companion, with the injunction that, if he joined in pursuit of my game, the odds would be *three* to *one* in his favour.

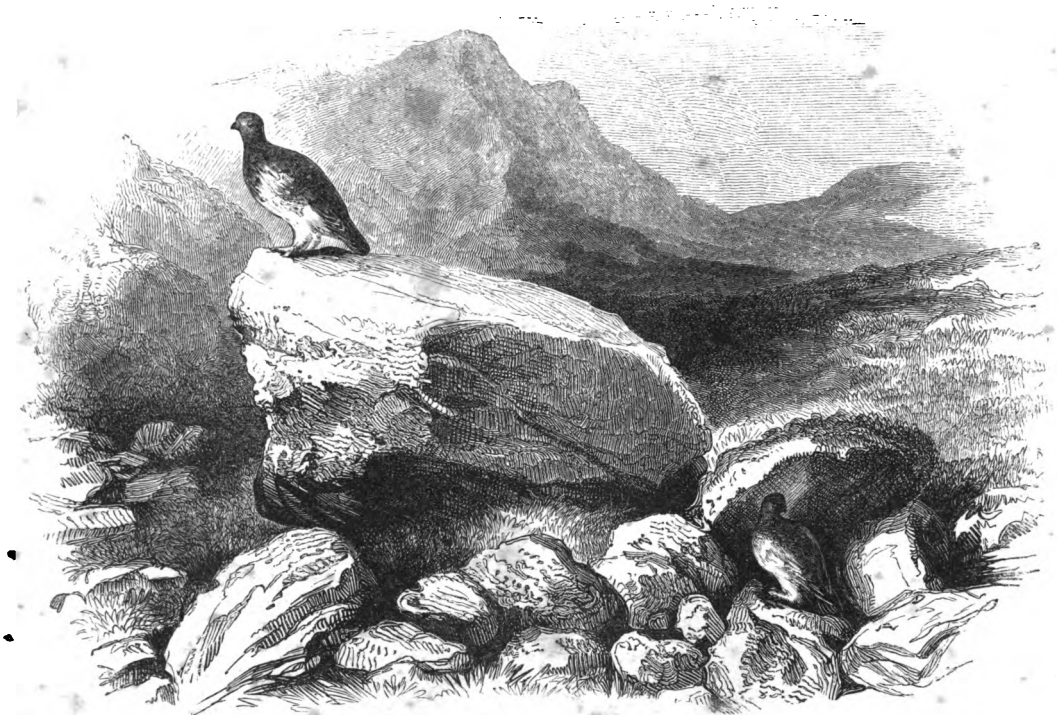
I had scarcely got to the peak, where I thought it most probable my three fugitives would again take refuge, when I was overtaken by one of those bitter hail showers which often fall on the mountains in early autumn; so, placing my gun in its waterproof cover, and

my back, Fitz-James-like, against a rock, I impatiently hoped for the cessation of the storm. Scarcely had it begun to abate, when an alpine hare came curtsying past about eighty yards from my shelter, and then seated herself with equal grace, as tempting a mark for a rifle as could possibly be placed. It was not to be resisted even with my small shot. So, slowly uncasing my gun, and taking *deadly* aim, I fired. Puss gave an active bound at this unlooked-for attack, and took her leave with far less ceremony than she made her entrée.

I had just reloaded, when my guide appeared with a breathless malediction on my gun. He had seen my friend going down the mountain, but quite beyond recall, and, when returning to me, had stumbled on the ptarmigan, most conspicuously perched on the top of a rock. He was in the act of taking his marks to know the place again, in the hope of finding me, when my shot abruptly put an end to his schemes. The birds were equally dissatisfied with the sound as their four-footed ally of the crags, and made the same use of their wings that she did of her legs. It was now late, but as the man had some idea of where they might be, I could not resist the temptation of giving them one more trial. We had almost given up hope, when they a third time rose, very wild, fully a hundred yards off, from a knoll of moss where they were at feed. My time was now "up," so I descended the mountain well pleased with my day's sport, notwithstanding the mishap at the end.

The ptarmigan, I believe, has never been tamed. It subsists on the rock-plants, mosses, and berries, upon which it is curious to see a pack feeding like grouse on young heather. The plumage begins to change colour in October, when the bird gains a double set of feathers for winter. In spring all these drop off, and it again assumes the colour of the rocks.

The woodcut represents a ptarmigan in its common attitude, cowering under shelter of a stone; the other is perched upon the top of a rock, an equally characteristic situation.



PTARMIGAN IN THEIR MOST USUAL ATTITUDE.

THE SPIRIT OF GLENCROE.

WHO has not heard of the Pass of Glencroe? The hills rising perpendicularly on both sides, gray to the top with immense masses of rock, that look as if an infant's touch would roll them from their insecure basis. It was my hap to live for a summer close to this savage gorge. When the weather was dull and rainy, and the clouds hung low upon the mountain-tops, the frowning grandeur of the scene could scarcely fail to depress the most buoyant spirits; and even when the day was fine and clear, a feeling of awe at least was inspired.

When I first came to the neighbourhood of Glencroe it was in early summer, and, of course, the Scotch mists were thick and frequent; but, overlooking the greater angling attractions of Loch-Lomond and its neighbouring streams, I generally took advantage of the fine days to wander, fishing-rod in hand, up this lonely and favourite haunt, to the little moor loch at its head.

The "Lochan Rest," so called from being close to the top of the glen, where a stone is set up with the

well-known inscription, reminding the weary wayfarer to "rest and be thankful," does not hold out many inducements for fishing. The trout, although well fed, and of a very uncommon colour, are not large; and it is most probable that the "lochan," but for its situation, would have been seldom visited by me. After loitering up the glen, where was nothing to relieve the dreariness of the scene but the plaided shepherd, accompanied by his uncouth half wild-looking dog, I generally spent an hour or two in filling my creel, and then slowly retraced my steps. The lochan was immediately under one of the most stupendous precipices in the pass, round the base of which the angler must try his casts.

In desolate regions like this, where the silence is only interrupted by the hoarse croak of the raven, or some other equally wild inhabitant of the mountains, the slightest sound, which otherwise might pass unheeded, will often arrest the attention. Such was the case with me on my first excursion to Lochan Rest. While screwing together my fishing-rod, I heard a low and peculiar whistle from the precipice above. Fancying it might be some shepherd, I took little notice; but as the same strange call was repeated at intervals during the whole time I was fishing, my curiosity was somewhat excited; I strained my eyes along the crags in every direction, but nothing was to be seen.

A few days after I again slung my fishing-basket on my shoulder for Lochan Rest, and I must confess that

the invisible tenant of the cliff had some share in attracting me back so soon. Scarcely had I wet my line when I heard the mysterious whistle, which continued as before until I left the loch. I tried to ascertain the exact spot from whence the sound proceeded, but was only the more baffled, as I had no doubt it was from a perpendicular and totally inaccessible rock. At last I became so accustomed to it, that I should as soon have expected to miss the trout from the loch as this wild note from the hill.

Summer was now advancing, and several engagements prevented my returning to the Lochan during my residence in the neighbourhood; but about the same season two years after, when showing a friend some of our Highland scenery, amongst other places I took him to Glencroe, and, in walking past the little loch, I almost started when I heard the well-remembered whistle! I had before given up hope of finding out the cause, and it had even occurred to me that it might possibly be some echo occasioned by the wind among the rocks. With this absurd solution I was fain to rest satisfied; and it was only last spring, when passing a steep and craggy hill in Perthshire, that the true one was discovered. A small bird flew out before me, and, perching on a detached piece of rock, struck up its wild peculiar note. It was the Spirit of Glencroe! With cautious steps I wound round the crag to get a nearer view of the bird, when I caught sight of its white breast, and, immediately de-

tecting the *rock-ousel*, felt sorry that my charm was dissolved.

I had once or twice in spring met with the rock-ousel on the moors, but had never heard it make any call beyond a harsh grating chirp.

The little incident mentioned above gave rise to the following stanzas, which I may be excused for inserting:—

THE heather-bell was blooming fair,
And gaily waved the yellow broom,
And many a wild-flow'r bright and rare
Lent to the breeze its choice perfume.

But lonely, lonely was the scene,
Grim rose the heights of dark Glencroe,
And, though the sunbeam smiled between,
They scarce return'd a kindlier glow.

Above me frown'd the jutting rock,
The wimpling burn beside me play'd;
Around me stared the mountain flock,
And ask'd—"Who dared their rights invade?"

A whistle strikes my startled ear!
A pipe of shrillest, wildest tone;
But human footstep, far or near,
None could I see—I stood alone!

Still and anon, with every breeze,
I caught that sound so strangely wild;
And who may tell what visions please
The wayward mood of Fancy's child?

Oft I return'd, when skies were fair,
To ply my fisher's task below,
And long the viewless tenant there
I named the Spirit of Glencroe!

Once more this thrilling call I heard,
As far I climb'd the misty hill;
Then past me flew a little bird,
With that same note so wild and shrill!

Spirit I deem'd it long, and still,
With its white breast and airy form,
It sat like spirit of the hill,
Above the cloud, and mist, and storm!

There is a stone which marks Glencroe,
To weary trav'llers known the best;
It bids them, ere they further go,
Tarry awhile by Lochan-Rest.

Hast *thou* no message, herald lone,
Perch'd on thy lofty turret-brow?
"Rest and be thankful," says the stone,
Bird of the rocks! what sayest *thou?*

"Rest to the weary—rest for men—
Through earth's dark pass worn wand'rers they—
Rest is the spirit of our Glen,
But ah! that rest lies far away!

"'Tis far away, 'tis far away!
Above my watch-tow'r lift your eyes;
Rest, weary wand'rers, rest ye may,
But rest *not* till ye reach the skies!"

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

TRAPPING THE ONLY EFFECTUAL WAY TO DESTROY VERMIN.

I HAVE put together the following directions for the trapping of vermin, in order that gentlemen may judge of the merits of their keepers in this respect; being well aware how few have any thing like a perfect knowledge of this most necessary part of their business. No moors or manors can abound with game unless the vermin are killed off; and if the traps are not set with much skill, and the places for planting them for the different kinds of vermin selected with great judgment, more harm than good is done, as few are caught and the rest put on their guard, and thus rendered more cunning and difficult to be trapped afterwards.

A gentleman should first ascertain if his keeper can perform the mere manual act of setting a trap. This must be done by cutting a shape for it with a mole-spade in the turf, thinly sprinkling the plate with earth, and then a top covering precisely the same as the ground: when set, it should be

neither higher nor lower. After having satisfied himself of the neatness of the setting, the gentleman may spring the trap, and if it closes clear of grass or leaves, he may rest satisfied that his keeper knows the A B C of vermin-killing. If, on the contrary, a quantity of the top dressing is caught between the jaws of the trap, the keeper is not fit to set for vermin, and must be made thoroughly master of this first requisite before he attempts to do so.

I shall now mention the different kinds of four-footed and then winged vermin, giving minute instructions how each may be most readily trapped. Foxes are the most cunning, and consequently most difficult to be taken. The best time to set for them is from the beginning of January—when the males follow the females—till March. Their haunts may then often be discovered by their wild peculiar bark. Any clear open space near them, with a hollow in the middle, is the place to plant traps. The hollow is necessary, as the fox always likes to be out of sight when he is eating. The bait is a piece of hare, rabbit, or the entrails of any animal, covered over slightly with earth; and half-a-dozen traps are set round with the utmost care. Fewer will not do, as the fox might escape between. The bait is covered over in order to make Reynard suppose that another fox or dog may have buried it there. Some drag it along the ground for a considerable distance on either side, after first rubbing it on the soles of their shoes, and letting fall little pieces of cheese at intervals: this can do no harm, but I think as little good.

The circle of twigs is also a very good way of trapping foxes all the year. It should be made larger than for martins

or cats, in order to contain more bait—this should be added to without being removed when it taints, *as the greater the scent the better the chance.* Traps set for foxes should never be made fast, or they are apt to gnaw the leg off: the best plan is to tie two or three together; for if the fox can drag them, however great the difficulty, he will not attempt the desperate remedy of *amputating his leg.* When they have litters, the old ones may be taken; but it requires great judgment to select the spot they would be most likely to walk over in going to and from their young: a first-rate trapper, however, will generally secure one or both. It is the more difficult, as the traps must be set at some distance, or the young ones would be apt to stumble into them. As only single traps are set, they should be tied to a stone just large enough for the fox to drag with some trouble. The keeper should always sprinkle a little water over the top covering of the trap to take off the scent of his fingers.

I do not give publicity to these modes of destroying foxes, with any design to their being followed in the Lowlands, where the gentlemen of the "View halloo!" would give me small thanks. I only write for the preservation of the Highland game and lambs; and am sure that if my plan was vigorously followed up, we should not be infested with half so many foxes as we are, "fox-hunter" and all! This, I believe it never will be, the fun of a Highland fox-hunt being so popular among the farmers as to overbalance the merits of any other system requiring trouble, dexterity, and patience.*

* I lately saw in the newspapers a plan for extirpating foxes in the Highlands. Each hill farmer was to keep a couple of fox-hounds, a good greyhound, besides

Cats, martins, and fowmartes are easily trapped. Plant a circle of twigs about three yards round, the twigs a foot and a half long and close to each other, placing the same bait as for a fox in the centre, but without any covering; leave two openings at opposite sides just large enough for the trap. You may also set with baits hanging on the stem of a tree—a few twigs placed on either side to prevent the vermin sneaking in there, and so carrying off the bait. Box-traps are very good for stoats or weasels, but as they are generally set in the low grounds, where pole-cats also abound, I prefer an iron rat-trap with a strong spring; having found that the fowmarte constantly pushed up the lid of the other, and so escaped. The rat-trap will hold a pole-cat, and do little or no injury to cattle or dogs. The bait should be hung upon a twig immediately above, and almost out of reach of the weasels.

Stoats, and especially weasels, are often seen in great abundance in summer. They may then be very easily shot, as you have only to imitate the squeak of a mouse to bring them close to you. I once, when without a gun, decoyed one so far away from its retreat that I killed it with my stick. Should the keeper see a weasel, all he has to do is, with as much speed as possible, to cut a small piece from any of his

terriers. When occasion offered, they were to join packs, and collect the best shots (*alias*, the greatest poachers) in the neighbourhood. I can only say, without in the least impugning the motives or honesty of intention of the projector, that if the Highland proprietors suffer a gang of this kind to take the hill at pleasure, they will soon hardly have a head of game on their estates. As to allowing farmers to keep greyhounds, terriers, &c., no gentleman who sets any value on his grouse or hares would ever think of it.

baits, drag it along the ground where he last saw the weasel, and hang it on a twig with his rat-trap under, as before described: if he does not let too long time elapse, it is sure to be taken. No traps should be set for running vermin during the warm weather, as the bait so soon taints—nor in hard frost, as the traps are then apt not to spring, or to hold the vermin so slightly that they escape.

WINGED VERMIN.

The hawk tribe, seldom or never taking a bait, are the most difficult to be trapped of all winged vermin. The only plan with any chance of success (except at the breeding time) is to place a trap on the top of a wall, or bare stump of a tree, throwing a dead cat or other carrion at the foot; the hawks will often alight, to look down at it, and thus be caught. A hawk, however, will always return to any bird he has killed, even should scarcely any thing be left but the bones. In such a case, immediately procure a trap, hang the bird directly above, and *close* to it, or the hawk may reach over and take it down without touching the trap.

But when they hatch is the time thoroughly to thin them. The nests should be most carefully searched out, and not disturbed until the young are more than half fledged. Many shoot the old hen flying off her eggs, but this is not the way to extirpate the race, as the males of course escape. When the young are pretty strong, and able to call loudly from hunger, take them out of the nest, and make two circles *out of sight of each other*. These circles must not be artifi-

cial or formed of twigs stuck in the ground, but any bushes of furze, heather, or rushes, must be taken advantage of for the purpose. Half of the young ones must be tied in the one, and half in the other. They must have very short tethers, or they will waddle into the trap. If this is well executed, you are sure of both old ones next day.

Buzzards and kites are easily trapped in autumn or winter, as they readily take a bait. It is not worth while to take much trouble about them, as they do little mischief to game, unless a young bird that cannot fly, or small leveret, happen to stumble in their way. I am loath to bring an accusation against my great favourite the ivy-owl, but truth compels me to say that he is nearly as injurious to game as the buzzard, quite as much so as the kite. The other owls, viz. the white and the long and short-eared, may be considered harmless.

Carrion-crows and ravens, or "corbies," take them for all in all, are perhaps as mischievous as hawks. The best season for trapping them is in March and April; the circle of twigs to be set in conspicuous places; the same bait as for foxes, martins, &c., will do, but the best is a dead lamb, from being so readily seen—and at that season it may be very easily procured. The numbers taken in this way are astonishing. When they become cunning, take down the twigs and plant half-a-dozen traps round the lamb.

Magpies, jays, &c., all take a bait; but the grand recipe thoroughly to destroy them, is to find the nests and set the young in circles.

There are many other ways of killing all these vermin which I have not thought it worth while to mention, as they

cannot stand a comparison with those I have named. Traps must always be set close to paths or any other open places near the haunts of the different vermin, with which it should be the keeper's great endeavour to make himself thoroughly acquainted. If placed according to these rules, there is not much danger of either cattle or game getting into any, except those set *without circles* for carrion-crows or foxes, which of course require caution. We constantly see keepers lounging about with their guns in pursuit of vermin: this ought not to be. Guns only tempt them to idleness, and are an excellent excuse for doing nothing. In my opinion no vermin should be shot by a gamekeeper. But if his master prefer securing the old hens as they fly off the nest during hatching time, instead of waiting for the young to come out, no other plan can be adopted. My reasons to the contrary have been given.

I have no doubt that the truly valuable keeper, who takes an interest in the duties of his situation, will approve of all I have said, and endeavour to profit by it: the careless, ignorant, and lazy, will as certainly cavil and condemn.

TRAPS.

Great care should be taken in the selection of traps: none but an approved maker ought to be employed: *that the springs are well tempered and strong is of the utmost consequence.* The jaws must *overlap*, which is a great preventive to the legs, especially of the winged vermin, being shred off. To avoid this, some traps are made with weaker springs and

long teeth—these are not to be recommended, for, although the teeth may counterbalance the weakness of the spring, yet the vermin are apt to feel them when walking up to the bait, and slink back without stepping on the plate. It is also much more difficult to set them neatly. Traps whose springs have been weakened by constant use may be reserved for flying vermin.

VERMIN TERRIER.

I had almost forgotten to say that every gamekeeper, in all his trapping and other excursions, should be accompanied by an excellent vermin terrier. The use of this dog is to challenge vermin in earths, clefts of rocks, &c., thus making the keeper aware where to plant a trap—to find out fowmartes in old walls or heaps of stones, where they generally conceal themselves—and to run those banes of the preserve, the *semi*-wild cats into trees, where, with the assistance of his master, they may easily be killed. A dog will soon become so expert at this last accomplishment that few cats will be able to escape him. These cats do much more mischief than real wild ones, as they are impudent enough to carry their depredations into the midst of the preserve, and close to the most frequented places. The fowmarte, although an enemy to all game, is generally more calumniated than he deserves—he is not nearly so injurious as the martin or cat. I have frequently found his retreat when no other signs of plunder were to be seen except a few frogs half-eaten. When discovered, the pole-cat has no activity, and if the wall or heap of stones

where he has sheltered himself can be pulled down or removed, he cannot escape.

Only *one and the same terrier* should be the keeper's constant companion, as the dog will soon be "up to" the traps, and from continual practice become first-rate at this work. He must have a very good nose, and be perfectly callous to game of all descriptions, but especially rabbits and hares.

INSTINCT OF DOGS.

It is often amusing to hear those who know little about the subject describing the "almost reason" of the St Bernard's dog, and not unfrequently of the Scotch "colley."

It appears to me that the instinct of these animals is more prominently forced upon their notice, and they do not take the trouble to watch and discover it in the other species. Sagacity is more equally distributed among the different varieties of the dog than such casual observers are aware of; but it, of course, takes different directions, according to the temper, habits, and treatment of the animal. It would be a waste of time so far to control the keen tempers of sporting dogs, (by which I mean setters and pointers,) as to make them perform the duties of a well-broke phlegmatic retriever. The instinctive power may therefore appear greater in one than the other; but from the quiet easy temper of the retriever, it is much less difficult to develop and make use of his instinct in that particular way: while the setter and pointer, owing to their more active life and hunting propensities, may often pass unnoticed, even by their masters, though, every time they are in the field, displaying as much tact as the most cautious retriever. Their sagacity is never thought of; and the only praise they get is, that they are "excellent dogs," which means *that they find plenty of game.*

There is another reason why sporting dogs appear more deficient in sense than some others, and that is their mode of life. Confined always in the kennel unless when seeking game, all their powers are employed to this end. There are, however, abundant proofs, that when made companions, and suffered to occupy a place upon the hearth-rug, they are capable of the same attachment, and would equal in sagacity the much lauded dogs of St Bernard.* Indeed, the usual mode of imprisoning sporting dogs is so great a disadvantage, that I have seen some with excellent noses and every requisite for the moors, grow sulky, and refuse to hunt with their usual freeness, unless left in a great measure to themselves. This, I know, arose partly from a want of proper management, and not keeping the medium between encouraging kindness and merited correction; for too much lenity is nearly as injurious to a dog as over severity: sulkiness will often be the effect in the one case, shyness in the other. Still, if the dog were allowed to be the companion of his master, he would both acquire sense and tact in half the time, and would not give half the trouble either by shyness or sulkiness; whereas it will generally be found, that a kennel dog is long past his best before he excels in that sagacity on the moor which so greatly assists him in finding game. Even the veriest village cur, when kindly treated and permitted to bask at the "ingle-nook," will learn all sorts of tricks, many of them requiring as much *reflection* as the most intricate duties of the shepherd's dog. I had a little cocker reared in a cottage, that of

* May we not be allowed to suppose the dog in Helvellyn, whose attachment to its dead master was thought a fit subject for their muse by two great poets of the day, was of the sporting kind?—at all events it was "*not of mountain breed!!*"

its own accord, when only seven months old, brought in the post-bag, thrown down by the mail in passing. The person who had charge of it, having been detained a little, was astonished to see the bag safely deposited in the house; and, upon watching next day, saw the little creature marching along with its load. It had seen the bag carried in once or twice, and immediately learned to do so.

I do not mean to deny that some varieties of the dog may excel others in sagacity—but this will be found in most cases to arise from other circumstances than the *natural gift*—and that dogs whose avocations require a phlegmatic, quiet temper, have certainly the advantage over others, though the instinctive powers of both, in the first instance, may have been equal. A terrier, for example, may and has been taught to herd sheep, and if kept to this employment would appear more sensible; but his snappish disposition (an advantage in his own more congenial occupations) renders him unlikely to excel in those of the colley. The latter again is admirably adapted for his own work; his thick rough coat protects him from the severity of the weather to which he is constantly exposed, and his less ardent temper prompts him to look for guidance from his master in all his movements. Both sheep-dogs and terriers may be taught to point; but they are always deficient in *hunt*, and their olfactory powers are never so acute as in those dogs which nature seems to have formed for the purpose. We thus see that dogs are trained to different employments, for many qualifications apart from their instinctive powers, though these may be materially increased or retarded by the nature of their occupations.

The Newfoundland and water-dog are generally reckoned paragons of sagacity; but has their treatment nothing to do with this? From their earliest days taught to fetch and carry, and never leaving their master's side, they learn to understand his least signal, and from constant practice sometimes even anticipate his will. This is also precisely the case with the colley; as soon as it is able, made to follow the shepherd to the hill, and from every-day habit always on the alert to please him, it daily acquires greater dexterity both in comprehending and obeying, till at last it can perform feats that perfectly astonish those who have not seen the gradual process. My retriever, already mentioned, has given many proofs of sagacity which have excited the admiration of those present; and yet I don't consider him at all more knowing than the old pointer, whose cut I have likewise given. A superficial observer would wonder at the comparison; but, independent of the tact and ingenuity displayed by the pointer in finding game, I feel convinced that if his educational advantages and temper had been the same as the retriever's, he would have equalled him *in his own beat.*

To illustrate my meaning, I may mention a feat or two of each.—Having wounded a rabbit on the moors when the pointer was behind a knoll, but fancying, from the agility with which it made its escape, that I had missed it altogether, I was surprised to see him shortly afterwards bring a rabbit and deliberately lay it down at my feet. It would have been nothing if the dog had been taught to fetch and carry; but on the contrary he is, of course, broke to drop at the shot and never to lay a tooth upon game. Had he seen me fire and

afterwards stumbled upon the rabbit, he would from his breaking have thought he had no business to touch it; but not having seen the shot, he fancied he had a right to bring what he had himself found upon the moor. Any person who was no judge of dogs would have said, "Why, this is no more than what any retriever puppy would have done." It is not, however, the mere act alone, but the connecting circumstances which often show the superior instinct of the canine species.

The performances of the retriever are more showy, and the generality of observers would immediately on that account pronounce him the more sagacious dog.—In taking a walk with him last winter, I met a friend who had dropped a whip: if this had happened to myself there would have been no difficulty, as I had only to send the dog off upon my track; but upon trial he immediately ran back upon that of my friend, recovered the whip, and brought it to me. Another time, when he was following an open carriage, a shawl was dropped: no one perceived the loss until the dog was seen carrying it in his mouth behind. Not long after a bouquet of flowers was missed: I immediately looked round for the retriever, and, to be sure, there he was with the bouquet most jauntily carried in his mouth. I only mention these as explanatory of my theory; viz. that we are apt to overvalue one dog for sagacity, while we overlook its more unpretending neighbour, because, from shyness, surliness, eagerness of temper, or want of practice, all its powers of instinct and memory are employed in *a different and less obvious way*; for there is no doubt, if a dog is eager, shy, or sulky, it

may have superior instinct, and yet *show less* than another of a more phlegmatic, sociable, or easy disposition. This accounts for the difficulty of procuring a good retriever from a cross between the water-dog and terrier, so valuable if the medium between them is preserved; because when the dog partakes too much of the nature of the terrier, his quick temper unfits him for the purpose, * and when too little he is generally deficient in nose. A cross between the water-dog and any others of the sporting kind would be still less likely to suit; and the Newfoundland is too large, and of the wrong colour. Perhaps (the noses of colleys and terriers being pretty much upon a par) a breed between a water-dog and colley might answer well; there is only the objection, that the progeny might be too large and conspicuous.

With regard to the St Bernard dogs, what is it they do, but what almost any dog of *equal strength* might be taught also? It is certainly a noble occupation, but far, I should think, from difficult, to teach a dog to run the track of a man upon the bare mountain, and either to guide or carry the benumbed wretch home. The colleys in the Highlands do the same when sheep are in jeopardy, and know their own

* A dog of a very cool temper will retrieve wild-fowl better in loch-shooting, than another with quicker movements and perhaps a finer nose. Many of the cripples in this shooting take refuge in weeds and bushes, and the keen-tempered dog is apt to overrun them, thus losing time; whereas the other slowly tracks them one by one to their hiding-place. It must be recollected that I do not speak of coast and cover shooting, where more agility is required: on the coast, from the numbers to be secured after a heavy shot of the stancheon gun; and in cover, that wounded hares and rabbits, winged pheasants, &c., may be more speedily retrieved. For my own part I should prefer the slow dog even in cover, but few sportsmen like to wait.

flocks from any others. They will also climb hills and work by the slightest signal from their masters at the foot. All this may appear very wonderful to any one unacquainted with the nature of dogs; and still more so when he sees the very colley which had excited his admiration, completely outdone in some *more domestic* feats of usefulness by a wretched turnspit.

If, therefore, my hypothesis be correct,—that there is not so much *real* difference in the instinct of dogs, but that the degree of sagacity they will exert for our benefit or amusement depends in a great measure upon their tempers and dispositions; and that the *treatment* they meet with has much to do in forming these tempers and dispositions,—it follows that too great care cannot be taken to train them properly, and especially *never to correct in anger or caprice.*

THE END.

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